

Are they really your perfect match?

Romance Scams What are the clues?



To find out more contact Trading Standards on **01635 519930** or
email **tsadvice@westberks.gov.uk**.

You can also call Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **03454 040506**



Clue 1

Scammers typically create a fake online profile designed to lure their victims in. Clues for spotting a fake profile include:

- their picture does not match their personal profile description.
- the partner they are looking for is much older than them.
- their personal messages do not reflect their profile educational achievements.
- the type of relationship they are looking for is wide and varied.

Clue 2

The scammer will typically express strong emotions for the victim in a relatively short period of time and will suggest the relationship is moved away from the website to a more private channel, such as phone, email or instant messaging. The scammer will also go to great lengths to gain the victim's interest and trust, showering them with loving words, sharing 'personal information' and even sending them gifts.

Clue 3

Once the scammer has gained their victim's trust, they will ask the victim for money, gifts and even their bank and credit card details. The scammer will claim that they need money for any of the following:

- an ill relative.
- an operation for themselves.
- they have been mugged and need cash to 'tide them over'.
- a business failure.
- to visit the victim but need help with the fare.

Tips for Avoiding Romance Scams:

- Be careful what you post and make public online. Scammers can use details shared on social media and dating sites to better understand and target you.
- Research the person's photo and profile using online searches to see if the image, name, or details have been used elsewhere. Reverse image search. You can Google how to do this www.google.com.
- Go slowly and ask lots of questions.
- Beware if the individual seems too perfect or quickly asks you to leave a dating service or social media site to communicate directly.
- Beware if the individual attempts to isolate you from friends and family or requests inappropriate photos or financial information that could later be used to extort money from you.
- Beware if the individual promises to meet in person but then always comes up with an excuse why they can't. If you haven't met the person after a few weeks, for whatever reason, you have good reason to be suspicious.
- Never send money to anyone you have only communicated with online or by phone.

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