

ROMANCE FRAUD, Don't Be A Victim!

In May 2019 a lady who believed she was in a genuine relationship, handed over £300,000 to this person, and they had never met in real life. Over many months, he had coerced her in to believing that they were buying a house and that they were planning an amazing future together.

She maxed out credit cards and borrowed from family and friends to hand over the cash.

After he asked for another £50,000, she became suspicious and decided to check with the bank at where he said, he had opened a joint account, and the bank told her that her name was not on the account. She then contacted his workplace, and they advised her that there was no-one there of that name.

It turned out, that buying a house and building a future together was all part of a scam, to the extent that the fraudulent boyfriend had tricked her in to believing that he had set up bank accounts with her, applied for mortgages, and much more in setting up their dream life together. He had managed to convince this lady to hand over her entire life savings, and get herself in to serious debt.

The words of the lady herself were "you see stories, you read stories about people evolved serious scams, but you feel like that's never going to happen to you".

2 years on, a recent review by the Financial Ombudsman ruled in her favour, stating that under the Contingent Reimbursement Model (also known as CRM), she was a victim of something called an authorised push scam, and therefore the banks should legally give her her money back.

So here are my top tips to how can you be aware of falling a victim to 'romance fraud';

1. Never send money to someone you are dating online, or allow them access to your bank account; and never take out a loan on their behalf
2. Do not hand over copies of your personal documents, such as your passport or driving licence
3. Never invest money on that person's advice
4. Do not receive or send parcels on the other persons behalf

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Reports show that online 'romance fraud', which is someone scamming you out of your money by pretending to want to be in a relationship, has been greatly on the rise due to the pandemic, with more people spending time online, than ever before.

In both 2019 and 2020, the amount of money lost in 'romance fraud' outstripped that stolen by online shopping fraud! So please be vigilant with anyone posing in a relationship that you have met online, asking for money.

If you have any indication that you have fallen for a scam, then contact your bank, the Police and report it to a cybercrime charity, such as Action Fraud, which you can do via their website at actionfraud.police.uk.

To empower yourself with more jargon free legal knowledge, then head over to our website at getlegallyspeaking.com where you can choose from over 100 free Podcast episodes to listen to.

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