

Most people on online dating sites are genuine, and want a relationship...



Who I am: Gary, 29

Where I am: Afghanistan, but from Luton

What I do: Soldier and proud of it

Love: Powerboating, socialising, Netflix



Who I am: Lucy, 23

Where I am: Inverness

What I do: SCBU Nurse

Love: Travel, clothes, shoes, Prosecco!



Who I am: Steve, 50

Where I am: London but work wherever it takes me

What I do: Builder

Love: Pub, 70's music, beautiful women

... but some are fraudsters, and only want your money.



www.getsafeonline.org





Who I am: Not Gary, Lucy or Steve



Where I am: ???

What I do: Scam people who date online



How: Starting off small, then asking for increasingly large sums until I clear you out

Moving you off the dating site platform so my activities stay below the radar

Duping you with hard luck stories and keeping you on the hook with promises

Gary, Lucy and Steve, however, aren't a soldier, nurse or builder. They're fake online profiles using somebody else's photos, posted by organised crime gangs whose sole aim is to defraud innocent women and men who think they've found love.

Every month, hundreds of men and women in the UK are conned out of sums as large as hundreds of thousands of pounds, often causing financial ruin and the trauma that accompanies it. It's a particularly heartless crime as it also dashes victims' hopes of finding love.

Expert tips to help protect you from romance fraud



Pick a reputable dating website and don't move the conversation off the site's messaging service until you're confident the person is who they say they are.

Get to know the person, not the profile. Ask plenty of questions – don't rush into an online relationship. This may also help you avoid becoming a victim of a false sexual relationship.

Check the person is genuine by putting their name, profile pictures or any repeatedly used phrases and the term 'dating scam' or 'romance scam' into your search engine.

Talk to your friends and family about your dating choices. Be wary of anyone who tells you not to tell others about them. Tell someone what you're doing – and where – before meeting an online suitor in person for the first time.

Never send money or your bank details to someone you've met online, no matter what reason they give or how long you've been speaking to them. If you're defrauded, your bank will normally do its best to recover your money, but is not responsible for refunding it if they don't manage to do so.

Don't give away too many personal details. Revealing your full name, date of birth, home address or workplace could lead to identity theft or even personal harm.

If you become a victim of romance fraud, report it immediately to the dating site where you met the perpetrator, and to Action Fraud on www.actionfraud.police.uk or on **0300 123 2040**. This makes it easier to take action and protect other innocent people, even though you may feel embarrassed to tell anybody.



For comprehensive, practical, impartial advice on safe online dating including safe first date meetings, visit www.getsafeonline.org/safedating

#safedating

Get Safe Online

Get Safe Online is the UK's leading source of information and advice on online safety and security, for the public and small businesses. It is a not-for-profit, public/private sector partnership backed by a number of government departments, law enforcement agencies and leading organisations in internet security, banking and retail.



For more information and expert, easy-to-follow, impartial advice on safeguarding yourself, your family, finances, devices and workplace, visit www.getsafeonline.org



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