

The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



Looking Out for Mobile Phones

Number 09 in a series of notes on important issues.

Do you own a mobile telephone? Your answer is probably ‘yes’ because almost everyone has one. They are a part of modern life and you see people all the time, everywhere, conducting conversations, sending and receiving texts and using their phones to download information from the Internet. Criminals would like to get their hands on yours!

This little story is not a particularly cheerful one. The lady in it has now changed how she lists names on her mobile phone. Her handbag, which contained her phone, credit card and wallet was stolen. Twenty minutes later, she called her husband from a pay phone to tell him what had happened. Her husband assured her that – “I received your text asking about our PIN number and I sent it to you a little while ago.” They rushed down to the bank only to be told by the bank staff that money had already been withdrawn from their account. The thief had used the stolen phone to text the entry “hubby” in her contact list and thus got hold of the PIN. Within twenty minutes he had withdrawn money from their bank account.

The moral of this story is that, ideally, your contact list should not disclose the relationship between you and the people listed. It is better to avoid using names like ‘home’, ‘hubby’, ‘dad’ or ‘mum’. It is just as important to bear in mind that, if sensitive information is being asked for by text, it is essential to check by calling the sender before responding.

The police also advise that, if you are texted by friends or family to meet them somewhere, be sure to call back to confirm that the message came from them. If you cannot speak to them, be very careful about going somewhere to meet a family member or friend just on the strength of a text message.

An elderly lady received a call from someone claiming to be her granddaughter in great distress. She said she had gone to Scotland with a friend. They had hired a car to drive home. The friend got drunk and they had had an accident. She could not get hold of her parents. The caller then said she was with a lawyer and she would put him on the phone. A man took over the call. He said that her granddaughter had been taken to a secure unit and he needed £10,000 to secure her release. He said he would meet her at a supermarket. Luckily, she rang her son. Her granddaughter was at home, fit and well but her mobile had been stolen.

By the way, scam texts and calls can be used to sign you up for expensive (£9 a week) mobile services under various names, two of which are ‘iFuntech’ and ‘payforit’. They can also claim that your service has been suspended and give you a link to contact – to pay them money! Criminals are always finding new ways to steal from you.

Jeremy Simmonds, Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall