

## 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 ..... Internet Safety

Number 32 in a series of notes on important issues.

The Internet (an expression that few would have understood twenty-five years ago because the World Wide Web is less than thirty years old) dominates our lives. Many (probably most) people use it and those who take advantage of this means of communication and source of information find it their constant companion. They are not put off by the knowledge that the misuse of the Internet by criminals is commonplace but always, in the back of their minds, is the worry that they might be the next target.

The key to safe Internet use is constant vigilance. Equipment and the software that operates it must be updated constantly to guard against evolving cyber-attacks. Passwords must be strong and changed regularly. Each website that is viewed must be inspected critically for signs that it is not what it claims to be and sophisticated protections against viruses and other forms of malware are vital. Last, back up your records regularly.

There is no magic cure or protection from fraud. If there was, criminals would find a way to neutralise it. There are however one or two guidelines that have proved valuable and have ongoing validity. They have the merit of simplicity –

#### **Shopping**

- Pay for purchases by credit card or a debit card because paying by direct bank transfer is like paying in cash, difficult to trace and not refundable.
- Always research a company from which you plan to buy. There may be negative reviews or forum posts online. Do not rely on a single review.
- Look for membership of recognised trade bodies or the name of a regulator with their own websites you can check.
- Study the website looking for spelling mistakes or irregularities. Does it show a valid landline phone number and full postal address? PO Box addresses and mobile numbers are easy to change, difficult to trace and popular with criminals.
- If the price looks too good to be true, it probably is!

#### **Messages and Browsing**

- Check the sender of each message you receive looking for discrepancies (eg ‘nn’ for ‘m’).
- Roll your mouse pointer over a sender’s name to reveal the true address.
- Do not click on links, open attachments or visit websites from an unexpected e-mail unless you are **certain** that the sender is safe.
- Do not call numbers from pop-up messages.
- Do not download apps or other software if you are not sure that it is safe to do so.
- Do not disclose personal or financial details unless you are **certain** of the recipient’s identity.

Following this guidance cannot guarantee your safety but it should help.

Jeremy Simmonds, Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall