

## **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 ..... The Latest News**

Number 35 in a series of notes on important issues.

The latest news is part of everyday life. Radio, television, the internet and social media are full of it. When something significant happens, even if it is the other side of the world, it is not long before these media get hold of it and everyone is told. Every individual has a different approach to this ever-changing flood of information. Some focus on tittle tattle in tabloid newspapers, some prefer their news in more heavyweight format. Some only watch the news on television once a day while others check social media on their mobiles hourly.

There is however something that is predictable about our approach to the latest news. We are all likely to pay more attention if that news can affect us personally in any way. Criminals are the same as everyone else but their attention has a slightly different motive. They look for news items that will help them to defraud unsuspecting people, who may be affected by a particular story.

News that a particular bank has experienced problems with its computer systems, locking people out of their accounts is just what a fraudster wants to hear. This means that thousands, even millions, of customers are likely to be particularly receptive to messages that seem to come from that bank. Now, if the fraudster can induce one or two of those customers into responding to his messages pretending to be their bank, he is on the way to a big haul.

The same can apply in other areas. The insolvency of a company with stores all over the country means that its customers will be worried about the arrival of goods they have paid for. News that a major household name has got itself into hot water and will have to pay compensation to those with whom it has done business means that many people will not be surprised to receive a communication out of the blue apparently from that source.

News of faulty cars, household appliances, pharmaceutical products, professional services and anything else serving a mass market can provide a fraudster with the same opportunities because people affected by these things are likely to be less suspicious if they are contacted in connection with that news item. The fraudster only needs to fool one or two of them to make a killing.

Text messages are often used by these fraudsters to start the ball rolling. Telephone calls and e-mails are also used. They all seek to persuade their victims to respond, click on a link, provide information, fall into the trap.

If you are affected by a news item, it is worth considering if there is any way it could be manipulated to make you a possible target for fraud.

Jeremy Simmonds, Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall