

Spot the signs	Protect yourself
<p>You've struck up a relationship with someone online and they declare their love for you quite quickly. They may even talk of marriage or other relationship milestones such as buying a house together. Many romance fraudsters say they are based abroad so will claim a big step in your relationship will be them returning to the UK to be with you. They will claim to be overseas because they work in the military or medical profession, or they're carrying out important charity work. This helps them paint a picture of themselves as being heroic, trustworthy and reliable, and also gives them an excuse for the use of international dialling codes or poor internet connection.</p>	<p>Avoid giving away too many personal details when speaking online to someone you've never met in person, as it can lead to your identity being stolen. This includes revealing your full name, date of birth and home address - even if you're doing it for what seems to be harmless reasons, such as your partner wants to send you flowers or a gift.</p>
<p>They constantly make up excuses why they can't video chat or meet in person and they try and move your conversation off the platform that you met on.</p>	<p>Stay on the site's messaging service until you meet in person. Criminals want to quickly switch to other platforms that are less regulated and have better encryption, so there's no evidence of them asking you for money. Whatever reason you're given to move away from the site where you met, if the other person is genuine, they will accept your decision to stay on the platform until you see each other in person.</p>
<p>When they ask for your financial help, it will be for a time critical emergency. The reason will be something emotive, which pulls at your heartstrings. They'll open up to you about a problem, or something that is worrying them to appear vulnerable and make you feel sorry for them. They may get defensive if you decline to help or make you feel guilty and responsible for the urgent emergency they claim you could have averted.</p>	<p>Most online platforms have a reporting tool which you can use if you suspect someone online is using pictures that don't belong to them, you are suspicious of their behaviour, or they have asked you for money. Reporting their user profile means it can be blocked, which helps protect others.</p>
<p>They tell you to keep your relationship private and insist that you don't discuss anything you talk about with your friends and family. This also includes the crisis they find themselves in that requires money. They will convince you this is part of the normal privacy that forms a healthy relationship.</p>	<p>No matter how long you've been speaking to someone online and how much you trust them, if you haven't met them in person do not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send them any money • allow them access to your bank account • transfer money on their behalf • take a loan out for them • provide copies of your personal documents such as passports or driving licenses • invest your own money on their behalf or on their advice • purchase and send the codes on gift cards from Amazon or iTunes • Agree to receive and/or send parcels on their behalf (laptops, mobile phones etc.)