

Police Scotland warning for 'money mules'



Police Scotland is warning the public not to be fooled by offers of quick cash as there's a high chance it could be linked to crime.

A key aspect of money transfer fraud are the 'money mules' who facilitate the laundering of the transferred cash through their personal bank accounts.

In 2017 across the UK, there was a 105% increase of individuals being utilised as money mules.

More than half are under the age of 30, with students and the unemployed among those who are particular vulnerable to being used as mules.

They can be asked to transfer money on behalf of people or to withdraw funds and send them overseas using money transfer services.

Money mules are recruited through bogus online part-time job adverts. As well as students and the unemployed, newcomers to the country and people in economic distress are also at risk.

Police are warning that there are severe consequences for those who get involved in money laundering, even unwittingly. They include:

- Prison term of up to 14 years
- Bank account closed
- Future difficulty getting loans, mortgages, mobile phone contracts.

Detective Constable Brian Bennie, from the Economic Crime Unit, said, "If a job sounds too good to be true, then it probably is."

"Even if you're unaware that the money you're transferring was illegally obtained, you've played a significant role in fraud and money laundering and can still be prosecuted, facing life-changing consequences."

"Companies should not ask you to use your own bank account to transfer money, and never give any bank details to someone you don't know or trust."

Shona Struthes, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland said, "It is very important that students are aware of this issue and we fully support Police Scotland's campaign."

"Colleges Scotland urges students to be vigilant to avoid getting caught up in any illegal money laundering campaign."

"The last thing we want is for students to jeopardise their future career prospects by unwittingly being duped into illegal money-making schemes. Students who are struggling financially may be entitled to support and student services staff within colleges are on hand to offer help and advice."

The Scottish Student Awards Agency said, "SAAS has previously supported the 'Don't be Fooled' money mule campaign through Facebook and Twitter to highlight the potential dangers which our student population could face from Money Mule scams. It is always important to raise awareness to those who may be targeted, ensuring they understand the impact of fraudulent activities."

Anyone with any concerns can call Police Scotland via 101.