



ISSUE 60

SCAMS AWARENESS NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

WELCOME TO OUR Monthly Newsletter

Coercive language and behaviour



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It often starts with kindness. A friendly message online. A polite comment on Facebook. Someone who seems to take genuine interest in your life. Before long, you're chatting every day. They say all the right things. You feel seen, valued, even cherished. And then - slowly, quietly - something changes.

You might notice they don't want you to talk to others about them. Or that they seem to have an endless run of bad luck. Soon, you're being asked for money, or to "help" them through a crisis. By the time it all unravels, you're left shocked and heartbroken - not just at the loss of money, but at how someone could twist your own kindness against you.

This month, we're exploring coercive language and behaviour — the hidden tools scammers use to manipulate people into trust, secrecy, and financial control.

Scammers don't rely on brute force or hacking skills — they rely on words. Their greatest weapon is psychological manipulation, and they use it to control emotions, isolate victims, and create dependency. Here are some of the most common emotional tactics used in romance and befriending frauds:

Isolation: “Don't tell anyone about us — they won't understand our love.”

This stops you from checking with family or friends, who might spot the warning signs.

Urgency: “If you love me, please help me now — I can't wait.”

They want you to act before you think.

Guilt: “After all I've shared with you, how can you not trust me?”

They make you feel responsible for their happiness.

Reciprocity: “I've been so honest with you — can't you do this one thing for me?”

They use emotional debt to get money or information.

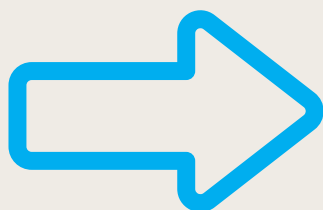
Shame: “You're making me feel like I can't depend on you.”

They twist your good nature into compliance.

This type of language is **emotional abuse** — a slow process of grooming and control, similar to what happens in coercive relationships.

How scammers twist everyday language

The table on the right are some examples of common manipulative phrases, and what they really mean.



Why it works: our brains are wired for **connection** and **empathy**. We want to help, to comfort, to believe. Scammers know this - and they use these instincts to slip past our critical thinking.

Manipulative Phrase	What It Really Means
“You're the only one who understands me.”	They're isolating you from others.
“Please keep our love private.”	They don't want anyone to expose the truth.
“I didn't want to ask, but I have no one else.”	They're creating dependency and guilt.
“If you really care, prove it.”	They're applying emotional pressure.
“You make me feel safe.”	They're making you feel responsible for their wellbeing.

How scammers build control step by step

Scammers follow a pattern. Once you recognise it, you can break the spell before it's too late.

1. **Love-Bombing:** They shower you with affection, compliments, and attention. You feel special.
2. **Mirroring:** They copy your interests and values — if you like gardening, they suddenly do too.
3. **Dependency:** You start looking forward to their messages. They message constantly, so you feel lost without them.
4. **Isolation:** They discourage you from sharing details with friends or family.
5. **Coercion:** Emotional pressure begins - tears, guilt, or even threats of harm.
6. **Exploitation:** The financial or personal requests begin - “just a small favour,” which quickly becomes more.

Scammers don't just want your money. They want your **trust** and **obedience** — because once they have that, the money follows easily.

It's Not Always Romance

“The Helper Scam”

George got chatting to “Tina” in an online gardening group. She seemed kind and knowledgeable, always complimenting his posts. After a while she suggested a simple way to “make his pension work harder.” It sounded safe - she even showed proof of her own success.

Angle: Scammers use **caring language** - they sound supportive and trustworthy, even protective.

Not every scam arrives wrapped in romance. Many start with friendship, helpful advice, or shared hobbies. In online communities, social groups and chat forums, fraudsters often pose as caring companions or mentors. What begins as genuine-seeming warmth slowly turns into subtle control - small requests, secrets, or guilt trips that chip away at independence. Scammers imitate real friendship so convincingly that even the shrewdest person can be caught off guard. True friends won't rush you, shame you, or make your kindness a test of loyalty. The difference is simple: real relationships build trust; scammers build control. Here are some examples of how this works:

“The Tech Support or Caregiver Approach”

A man calling himself ‘Daniel from Microsoft Support’ phoned Alice to ‘fix her security problem’. He was kind, patient, and called back for weeks, building rapport. Soon, he convinced her to let him remotely access her computer to ‘keep her safe’.

Angle: This shows **behavioural coercion** — reassurance, patience, and familiarity used to create trust. It's emotional control through **helpfulness**.

“The Charity Volunteer”

Ruth met “Peter” in an online volunteering network. They both cared deeply about animal welfare and often exchanged uplifting messages. When he mentioned that his rescue project overseas was short of funds, Ruth was quick to offer a donation. He thanked her warmly, even sending photos of “the rescued dogs.”

Angle: Exploits **shared compassion** and **moral connection** to build trust and make financial requests feel like acts of kindness rather than risks.

“The Long-Lost Relative or Old Friend”

Brian got a message from a man claiming to be an old army friend. They shared memories and photos - then came the story of hard times overseas. Before long, Brian was sending ‘help with travel money’ to someone he'd never actually met.

Angle: The emotional manipulation here is **nostalgia** - using shared memories and sentimentality.



Fraudsters often use pressure, secrecy, or emotional manipulation to make people act before they think. These simple steps help you stay calm, confident, and in control:

Talk it out. If someone makes you feel uneasy or rushed, speak to a friend or family member. A quick chat can give you perspective and break the spell of manipulation.

- ✓ 1. Trust your instincts. If something feels “off,” it usually is. That gut feeling is your early-warning system - don't ignore it.
- ✓ 2. Be wary of secrecy. If someone asks you to keep your conversations or actions private, or not to tell anyone else - that's a major red flag. Honest people have nothing to hide.
- ✓ 3. Never move money for someone else. No matter how urgent or believable their story seems, it's a classic sign of fraud.
- ✓ 4. Take your time. Genuine relationships and opportunities don't demand instant decisions. Slow down and think things through.
- ✓ 5. Verify their story. Look for clues - try a reverse-image search of their photos or ask specific questions that only a real acquaintance could answer.



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01625 612958 (OPTION 5)



scams@ageukcheshire.org.uk