

Dear Age UK East Sussex,

I am writing to you to say a few words of thanks for the tremendous help I've had from Age UK and in particular, your Scams Prevention Officer in East Sussex.

I'm a 68-year-old pensioner. Last year I was a victim of massive fraud, identity theft, and scams from a lodger in my house. This involved credit card theft, setting up companies in my name, without my knowledge, mobile phone fraud, diverting my post, so I got no warnings, and me losing over £30,000 in money spent on fraudulent decoration and building works done in my home et cetera et cetera. It was absolutely devastating. This individual is still on the run and I discovered from the police that I was just one of seven victims of this person at the same time, in the Hastings/Rother area alone.

At the same time that that was going on, as well as dealing with the Police and all the credit card/mobile phone/Bank fraud departments and Companies House etc, I was dealing with the return of prostate cancer, serious problems with haemorrhoids, which involved having an extremely painful haemorrhoidectomy last November which unfortunately has not been successful, and I have to have again, and major surgery on my spine which happened two months ago, but from which I got an infection and was re-hospitalised and I've only just recently got home from all of that. It's been without doubt one of the worst years of my life and to have had to go through this alone as a single man since my divorce seven years ago. To say this has been extremely challenging is a major understatement.

I was advised by a friend at the start of the fraud situation last September to get in touch with your Scams Prevention Officer and I cannot tell you how extraordinarily wonderful she has been to me. Although I had to deal with the fraud myself with all of the departments involved, it was your officer who told me exactly how to go about things, what to do, in what order to do them, and more importantly than anything gave me the encouragement and moral support I needed to get through it. I honestly could not have done it without her. She regularly checked in on me whether I contacted her or not, which was wonderful to feel that someone actually cared about what was going on with me. It took me literally months to deal with all the different fraud departments and to get my bank to rescind my bank loan which had been taken out to pay this fraudster to do these fraudulent and shoddy unfinished works on my house which I've had to have done all over again at even more cost. It was an incredibly debilitating, demoralising and painful experience to go through both physically and mentally, but I got there in the end.

Your Scams Prevention Officer also was invaluable in pointing out many different grants I didn't know I was entitled to through my pension and pension credit et cetera and she helped me fill out these enormously onerous forms. I'm very happy to say that I've been entirely successful in receiving these extra monies which have really helped me re-stabilise my life and my mental health over the last few weeks. I cannot thank her enough and I just wanted to recommend her to both of you as an outstanding employee of Age UK East Sussex. Pure gold!

I send my sincere thanks and best wishes to all of you. Mr X