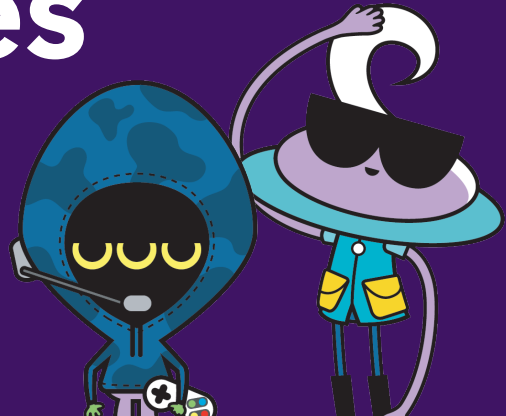


Money mules

Fact sheet

In 2017, more than 8,600 young people in the UK, aged 18-24, were caught using their bank accounts illegally – by acting as ‘money mules’.



What is a money mule?

A money mule is a person who transfers stolen money on behalf of others, usually through their bank account. Criminals contact people and offer them cash to receive money into their bank account and transfer it to another account. The person who is moving money between criminals is called a ‘money mule.’

What is the money used for?

The money that money mules transfer is usually stolen and used for lots of different crimes, such as acts of terrorism or fraud. The money mule often doesn’t know where the money has come from or where it will end up.

Why would someone become a money mule?

Criminals often target groups of people who are likely to be in need of money, including young people, university students, or the unemployed. The money mule is offered an easy way to make some cash.

How do criminals find money mules to target?

Criminals usually try to make friends with the person they are targeting (perhaps on social media), so the money mule is more likely to trust the criminal and agree to help out.

The criminal offers big money for little effort, saying that the ‘offer’ will not last for very long. The criminal may threaten the person if they don’t agree to do the task.

How are money mules caught?

Banks have systems in place to detect suspicious money moving between accounts. The bank will let the police know, so they can catch the money mule and the criminals.

What happens when the money mule is caught?

If someone is caught acting as a money mule:

- Their bank account will be closed
- They will find it difficult to get loans (including a student loan) or phone contracts
- They could go to prison for up to 14 years

How can I avoid money mule schemes?

- Be wary of people you don’t know contacting you – especially on social media
- Never give your personal details or bank account details to anyone you don’t know and trust
- Be wary of offers of easy money – if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is

