Devon and Cornwall ALERT

Devon & Cornwall POLICE

Urgency: 3 2 1

CYBER

A fraud involving WhatsApp groups

WhatsApp groups are being targeted by scammers who infiltrate these groups, then deceive the group's members into sending them money.

This fraud often begins when a member of the group receives a WhatsApp audio call from the fraudster, pretending, or claiming, to be a member of the group. This is done in order to gain the individual's trust, and often the scammer will use a false profile picture and / or display name, so at first glance it would appear to be a genuine member of the group.

The fraudster will then call the victim and say they are sending a one-time passcode which will allow them to join an upcoming video call for group members. The scammer then asks the victim to share this passcode with them so they can be "registered" for the video call. What's really happening is that the scammer is asking for a registration code to register the victim's WhatsApp account to a new device where they then "port" their WhatsApp profile over.

Once the fraudster has access to the victim's WhatsApp account, they will enable two-step verification which makes it impossible for the victim to access their account. The scammer will then message other members of the group, or friends and family in the victim's contacts, asking them to transfer money urgently as they are in desperate need of help.

Please be wary when receiving contact via WhatsApp or other messaging platforms. This is particularly the case when being asked to provide account information – despite the fact that you may recognise the individual's profile picture and / or name.

Never share your account information with anyone, and if you think it's a fraudulent approach, report the message and block the sender within WhatsApp. To make your account more secure, we advise setting up two-step verification to provide an extra layer of protection. This makes it increasingly more difficult for fraudsters to gain access to somebody else's WhatsApp account.

What can you do to avoid being a victim?

- **Never** share your account's two-factor authentication (2FA) code (that's the six digit code you receive via SMS).
- **Set up two-step verification** to give an extra layer of protection to your account.

Tap Settings > Account >Two-step verification > Enable.

- **THINK. CALL**. If a family member or friend makes an unusual request on

WhatsApp, always call the person on a phone number you know to be correct, to confirm their identity.

- You can **report spam messages or block a sender within WhatsApp**. Press and hold on the message bubble, select ‘Report’ and then follow the instructions.

If you have been a victim of fraud or cybercrime, report it at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.