

Metropolitan Police

MONEY MULES



Introduction

The UK is experiencing an increase in young people allowing their bank accounts to be used to receive and move money on behalf of third parties. This money often originates from crime; their account becomes a 'Mule Account' used to launder criminal funds making the account holder a 'Money Mule'.

Young people are increasingly being recruited as 'Money Mules'. They are recruited via social media platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram or Facebook, other messaging such as text/WhatsApp or in person at their school, university or sports clubs. They can be lured by the offer of money for allowing their account to be used, convinced they are doing so as a favour, or can be coerced.

Anyone allowing their bank account to be used by an individual not registered on the account is breaching their bank's terms and conditions. Anyone allowing criminal funds to go through their bank account is facilitating criminal activity and committing Money Laundering, an offence under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

What is a Mule Account and how does it work?

Mule accounts are accounts belonging to either an individual or business which are used to move the proceeds of crime, this process is known as money laundering.

Mule accounts can be 'complicit' i.e., used with the knowledge of the account holder, or 'non-complicit' i.e. used without the knowledge of the account holder. This is complicated further as the holder of a 'complicit' mule account may have known that the account would be used to launder proceeds of crime or tricked into allowing their account to be used, believing it was for a legitimate purpose. There are also a large number of mule accounts set up for the sole purpose of laundering criminal proceeds, these are often set up using false identities and fraudulent documents.

Some street names used are; Squares, AC, Easy Cash Schemes, Flips, Money transfer jobs.

What are the signs?

In order to protect young people from becoming involved in Money Laundering, these are some thoughts of what a parent/guardian could consider;

Firstly, speak to the young person; what do they know or understand about Money Mules or any of the street names used? Have they ever been approached by anyone, online or in person to use their bank account?

Secondly, check any bank statements of the young person's account/s, are there any unexplained transactions shown. Is the young person coming into possessions, cash, mobile phones, trainers, clothes that they cannot account for? Is there any evidence of new bank accounts being opened that you were not aware of, whether in the young person's name or another name?

The young person may see this as "only transferring money", or "letting someone use your account", but it's not as innocent as that. They are helping criminals commit crime, often against vulnerable people.

The consequences for the young person to consider, Bank Accounts are private, anyone allowing their bank account to be used by an unauthorised person or have criminal funds go through the account would breach the terms and conditions of the Bank account. If you allow your bank account to be misused in any way, the bank will close your account and report you to credit agencies. **This report lasts for 6 years and if there is a guarantor on the account, this may affect them.**

The account holder's credit rating will be affected (for the reported 6 years). It will be difficult to open another bank account or get simple credit, for example a mobile phone contract, car loan Student loan or even a mortgage later on as account holder's financial credit rating will be tarnished with a mark against them.

The account holder is also committing a crime themselves. Anyone allowing criminal funds to go through their bank account is committing an offence of Money Laundering under the Proceeds of Crime Act. You could be subject to an arrest, have your Fingerprints, DNA and Photograph taken and depending on your age have your parents/guardians informed. You

could face up to 14 years imprisonment and/or be given a fine/community service. Whatever the sentence, you have a Criminal Conviction.

Then consider the social effects, how would you be perceived by your family or friends? What message does this send to a future employer? Think about travel, want to see the world someday? Many countries will refuse entry based on a criminal conviction, particularly Canada and the US, where even a minor criminal conviction could refuse you entry.

It is not 'easy money' it is criminal money

- Never give anyone details of your Bank Account, your Bank card, PIN number, passcode or password – Bank accounts are private.
- Don't be lured or persuaded to receive money into your account, even as a one off no matter how plausible it sounds.
- If you have been approached, break off all contact and don't receive or move any money and seek advice.
- You can report the matter to Action Fraud or the Police, speak to the Schools Officers or use Crime Stoppers online or on 0800 555 111.

For more information on Fraud prevention go to;

www.met.police.uk/fraud

www.getsafeonline.org

www.moneymules.co.uk

