

As Fraud Survey reveals increase in identity theft, Ulster Bank launches nationwide 'Friends Against Scams' training to help customers avoid fraudsters

The survey comes ahead of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, when 22% of adults plan to shop online and in-store

13 November 2018: All Ulster Bank staff are to receive 'Friends Against Scams' training to help customers to avoid fraudsters and keep their money safe. The training will be completed by all staff this year and will benefit customers and non-customers across the country. The 'Friends Against Scams' initiative was started in the UK to help organisations to train staff and spread the anti-fraud message.

The announcement comes as Ulster Bank today released the findings of its 2018 Fraud Survey, which sought views on a range of issues including banking habits, attitudes to data security and personal information, and knowledge of the different types of fraud.

The survey found that there's been a significant increase in the proportion of those who claim to have been a victim of identity theft, up from 8% in 2017 to 14% in 2018. It also found that identity theft is highest amongst women (17%) and those aged 35 to 44 (17%).

Among the other key findings of the survey were:

- Almost two thirds (63%) of adults claim to shred all their financial correspondence, with only 8% throwing it in the main bin with the household waste. However those aged 18 to 24 were significantly more likely to throw it in the main bin, with almost a quarter (22%) admitting to doing this.
- 87% of adults say that they regularly monitor their own account for unusual activity and two thirds (62%) of adults claim to have anti-virus software on all of their devices.
- (67%) of adults know what malware is and are able to identify an email containing malware.
- 81% of adults cover the keypad when inputting their PIN at the ATM, with those aged over 65 most likely to do so, while almost 9 in 10 (85%) adults would rate their online password(s) as being quite strong.
- 42% of adults claim that they can't keep track of the number of online passwords they use, while only 35% claim to have three passwords.

The survey comes ahead of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, during which just over 1 in 5 (22%) adults plan to shop both online and in-store. That figure goes up to 47% for 18 – 24 year olds and drops to 5% for those aged over 65.

Commenting on the survey results, Ciarán Coyle, Managing Director, Retail Banking, Ulster Bank said;

"Friends Against Scams training has been incredibly beneficial to our colleagues and customers in the UK and now our staff and customers in Ireland will experience the benefits of the programme. We want to arm our staff and our customers with the information and the means to defend themselves against a scammer. This initiative will strengthen the work already underway by Ulster Bank's team of Community Bankers around the country and our Community Protection Advisor.

“It’s reassuring to see that over two thirds (65%) of respondents to this year’s Ulster Bank Fraud Survey say they are fairly confident that they could detect a potential scam. That’s up from 54% in 2017. However the research also shows that less than a quarter of respondents (23%) say they’re very confident that they know what kind of security information their bank may ask them for. That’s down from almost a third (29%) in 2017. At Ulster Bank we want to play our part in ensuring customers are kept as safe and secure as possible, regardless of how they bank with us. That is why we have robust monitoring in place to protect customers and are taking steps to help educate us all even further about how customers can protect themselves too.”

Ulster Bank’s Community Protection Advisor, Denise Cusack said:

“Every day I travel around the country meeting customers and community groups to provide support to those who have been the victim of a fraud or a scam. I see first hand the financial and emotional distress that can be caused and I know how important awareness and education are if we are to prevent this. It’s good to see that many people are taking steps to protect themselves, with 87% saying that they regularly monitor their account for unusual activity and two thirds (62%) having anti-virus software on all of their devices.

“If we are to reduce the number of people falling victim to scams we all need to do more to educate and protect ourselves. The rise in identity theft revealed by this research is particularly worrying. I would advise people to take steps to protect your own data online or over the phone, and to always destroy all documents containing your personal data, rather than just discarding them with the rest of your rubbish. If you do encounter suspicious behaviour, remember to contact our dedicated fraud and scams team immediately.”

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Notes to Editor:

Top tips for consumers to remember when banking online

1. Be vigilant. Just because someone knows basic personal details (such as names and addresses or even a customer’s mother’s maiden name), it doesn’t mean they are genuine. We advise customers to listen to their instincts – if something doesn’t feel right, take a moment to stop and pause and think things over.
2. Customers should always follow their bank’s security advice and never provide remote access to their device when asked to do so following a cold call.
3. Customers should be cautious with what they disclose on social media and take precautions to ensure that their profile is private and only viewable to people they know.
4. We advise that customers should keep their mobile devices’ operating systems up to date to ensure that they have the latest security patches and upgrades.
5. A genuine bank or organisation will never ask a customer to transfer money to a safe account for fraud reasons.
6. A genuine bank will never contact a customer out of the blue to ask for their full PIN or password. Stay in control and have the confidence to refuse unusual requests for information. Your bank will never ask you to disclose card reader codes over the phone under any circumstances.

Research

The Ulster Bank fraud research was carried out by Empathy Research. Research was conducted through an online survey across a nationally representative sample of 1,023 adults aged 18+ in October 2018.

Friends Against Scams

'Friends Against Scams' was created in the UK to provide information about scams and those who fall victim to them. RBS was a founding partner of the 'Friends Against Scams' programme when it launched in the UK in 2016, with the simple aim to reduce the number of people falling victim to criminal scams.