

Student Accommodation Fraud Scam Warning for 3rd Level Students - 10/8/21

- There were a total of 503 cases of rental scams reported to AGS between 1st February 2019 and 31st May 2021.
- These incidents have been declining in the last 18 months with Covid19 restrictions the likely cause of the decline.
- Almost half of these incidents occurred in the Dublin Region.
- Just over €900,000 was stolen in rental scams over this period.
- 42% of all injured parties were under the age of 25.
- 72% of all injured parties were under the age of 35.

Gardaí are advising people to be wary of rental scams, particularly at this time of year when students are returning to college.

While accommodation frauds have declined in recent months due to Covid19 restrictions Gardaí have highlighted that the new generation of 3rd level students seeking accommodation could be a target for fraudsters.

Detective Superintendent Michel Cryan of the Gardaí National Economic Crime Bureau gave the following advice:

You should only use recognised letting agencies or deal with people who are bona fida and trusted. Websites can be cloned, check the URL to ensure it's a real website and take note of the privacy and refund policy sections.

Be very wary of social media advertisements or where a person letting the location will only communicate via messenger or Whatsapp. You should push for direct answers and if responses are vague disengage immediately.

Watch out for unsolicited contacts or where the contact appears to be based in other jurisdictions and especially if there is a sense of urgency like "a one-time offer".

If you have decided to take up the offer only use trusted money transfer systems, I would recommend using a credit card. Never transfer money direct, pay cash, pay into cryptocurrency wallets.

Be wary if a website is asking you to send money to a random PayPal address, wire it by Western Union, pay in iTunes gift cards or only deals in cryptocurrency. The majority of the time, those methods are done to avoid scrutiny and ensure that a transaction can't be reversed.



RED FLAGS

- When the landlord is unable to meet up to show you the property in person. Covid-19 restrictions no longer acceptable excuse.
- When communication is only through Text / WhatsApp or other social media platform.
- When the property is offered with no questions asked and payment demanded immediately before signing the lease.
- When you are asked to pay cash, cryptocurrency or money via a non-bank transfer. (such as wire transfer)



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CHECK LIST

- Never agree to rent a property without first having the opportunity to view it.
- Do not hand over cash. Insist upon a proper receipt.
- Ensure that the keys work and you have proper contact details for the landlord/agent.



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