At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

MONEY MULING

Money muling involves individuals – very frequently young people – being recruited to transfer illegally obtained funds into and out of their bank account on behalf of criminals (often without even realising that's the kind of activity they've become embroiled in), and usually being allowed to keep a certain amount for themselves. It's essentially a digital form of money laundering. This guide highlights some of the risks associated with money muling, and provides parents and carers with useful tips to help safeguard young people against becoming ensnared by this growing online hazard.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

LEGAL REPERCUSSIONS

Young people may be lured by the promise of quick, easy money, but by doing so they will become unwitting participants in activities that can have severe legal and financial consequences. Money muling is a serious offence under UK law: involvement in such schemes can result in imprisonment and fines (or both). Remember, the threshold for criminal responsbility in the UK is 10 years of age.

ONLINE RECRUITMENT

Cyber-savvy criminals are increasingly using various online methods, including social media apps and gaming platforms, in their attempts to recruit young people as potential money mules. The criminals often deploy persuasive, deceptive tactics to gain children's initial interest and attention, then seek to exploit their trust and naivety.

POSSIBLE EXPLOITATION

Money muling is frequently carried out in tandem with other organised criminal activities such as the drugs trade or human trafficking. Not only is money muling a criminal offence in its own right, therefore, but it could also expose young people to harmful situations as well as potentially putting them in contact with some extremely dangerous individuals.

FINANCIAL LOSSES

If they (even unknowingly) transfer funds that are traced back to criminal activities, money mules can face considerable financial losses: their bank may freeze their accounts, and they can be held liable for any illegally obtained funds. People involved in money muling often also find themselves at greater risk of becoming entangled in other forms of criminal financial exploitation and fraud.

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

Involvement in money muling can have a lasting negative impact on a young person's reputation, education and employment prospects, and place colossal strain on their family life. A conviction for financial fraud would significantly damage a young person's future opportunities: they could be blocked from opening a bank account, taking out a mortgage or even securing a phone contract.

Advice for Parents & Carers

EDUCATE AND COMMUNICATE

Talk to your child about the risks and consequences of money muling, emphasising the importance of making informed decisions and seeking guidance if they need it. Create an open, non-judgmental space which encourages them to share their concerns and experiences, ensuring they feel comfortable getting help if they suspect they may have become involved in money muling.

MONITOR ONLINE ACTIVITIES

If you have concerns, you might want keep a closer than usual eye on your child's online presence, including their profiles on social media and any gaming platforms that they use. These can often serve as useful early warning systems which might help you to detect any signs of attempted recruitment by criminals or other types of suspicious behaviour.

TALK ABOUT MONEY

Discussions about avoiding being recruited as a money mule are also good opportunities for a refresher with your child about financial responsibility and good money management. It's also a helpful starting point for highlighting the importance of earning their money by honest means and the potential consequences of getting involved in illegal activities, both online and offline.

STAY INFORMED

Criminals' methods and approaches to recruiting young people as money mules frequently evolve to reflect the online landscape. Try to stay aware of criminals' current tactics and make time to regularly check out resources provided by schools, law enforcement and financial organisations. The Don't Be Fooled Campaign (at www.moneymules.co.uk) has plenty of useful information and advice.

REPORT YOUR SUSPICIONS

If you have reason to believe that your child, one of their friends, or someone they know has been recruited into a money muling operation, seek support and then report your suspicions. For your own safety, please **don't** attempt to directly confront anyone you suspect of organising money muling. Instead, contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Meet Our Expert

Ross Savage has a proven track record in countering financial crime, having spent 13 years with UK law enforcement – specialising in money laundering investigations and asset recovery from organised criminal groups. He now holds senior visiting expert positions at various organisations and delivers customised training and consultancy to government and private-sector clients worldwide.

Source: www.moneymules.co.uk | https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/moneymuling
www.ukfinance.org.uk/press/press-releases/parents-urged-help-stop-rise-child-money-mules

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