

# Password warning

Staffordshire Community Services are warning consumers to think carefully when choosing usernames and passwords for websites.

Their warning follows a report of a gentleman who suffered theft from his Paypal account after inadvertently disclosing his eBay username and password to scammers following the receipt of a phishing email. The victim had chosen the same password for both his eBay and his Paypal account.

The scammers were able to access the eBay account and carry out fraudulent activity in the victim's name. With a little guesswork, the scammers also accessed the victim's Paypal account and made a number of fraudulent online transactions.

Trading standards officers advise Internet users to choose unique, hard-to-guess passwords for websites for whom security is of high importance (e.g. online banking, eBay, Paypal). On no account should these passwords be shared with 'casual' website registrations, such as online user forums and discussion groups, nor should they be shared with registrations for online retailers.

The victim in this instance suffered through inadvertently responding to a 'phishing' email – a bogus email that appeared to originate from a known source but in fact pointed to a spoof website designed to steal password information or install malicious code on the user's PC.

Email users should assume that any emails purporting to originate from banks and similar organisations are bogus if they contain 'login' requests (for whatever reason) and accompanying website links.

All our alerts are available in a range of formats and languages, including large print. Please contact Cath Wohlers if this would be helpful to you, or to someone you know.  
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