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**Being Aware**

A safeguarding activity for a Mothers' Union meeting

We tend to think that safeguarding is just about child protection. Safeguarding is about looking out for ourselves – and for our families and friends.

In this resource, there are two different scenes which highlight areas of safeguarding which, sadly, are all too common. Each scene has a ‘script’ version for members of your group to act out, or if you prefer, there is a link to a YouTube recording of each of the scenes. It’s suggested that you choose just one of the scenes to consider at a meeting (you can always use the other at a later date).

*Owing to some unforeseen issues, we are unable to upload the YouTube recordings at this time – we hope to be able to rectify this situation shortly.*

**Auntie Maisie**

This conversation highlights the situation of an elderly lady who has recently been widowed and the influence of a young man on her life.

After you have watched the scene, discuss the following points:

* What are the signs that Auntie Maisie may be being groomed? Is she being coerced? If so, how?
* What changes in behaviour has Fran noticed?
* Is Dominic all he seems? Is Auntie Maisie at risk of physical harm?
* Why does Auntie Maisie not want to upset Dominic?
* What course of action should Fran be taking?

**Scam and Opportunity**

A conversation between friends which highlights not only the range of scams which we can so easily be taken in by but also the ways in which our own actions can give others the opportunity to take advantage.

After you have watched the scene, discuss the following points:

* How many potential scams can you spot?
* What opportunities for criminal activity have been highlighted?
* Where can you find out about the latest scams? \*
* What can we do to help protect ourselves and our loved ones from opportunist thieves?
* Who, in your opinion, is the most likely to be taken in by a scam or targeted by an opportunist thief: Viv, Annie or Polly?

\* There are websites which highlight current scams, such as

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/scams/check-if-something-might-be-a-scam/>

The major banks also have advice on their websites.



**Auntie Maisie - Script**

*Two Mothers’ Union members are busy boxing up items for the local food bank*

***Props:*** *Table and two chairs, two mugs of tea, three or four boxes one almost packed, box of teabags, jar of marmalade, packet of chocolate biscuits, bananas, various food items*

**DIANA:** I haven’t seen your Auntie Maisie in church recently, Fran. Is she OK?

**FRAN:** I think so, Di. At least, she was last time we spoke. Pass me a box of teabags, please.

**DIANA** *(handing Fran some teabags)***:**

I thought you saw her quite regularly.

**FRAN:** Thanks. Oh, I used to, especially since Uncle Terry passed on. It hit her so hard. He was such a lovely man, so kind. I only seem to speak to her on the phone these days and then only at certain times. *(She pauses holding a jar of marmalade)* No, it’s strange come to think of it.

**DIANA:** What’s so strange? You’ll drop that jar in a minute.

**FRAN** *(looking at the jar and* *putting it slowly in her box)*:

Auntie Maisie always loves my homemade marmalade, especially if I put ginger in it. I say loves, but I suppose I should say loved.

**DIANA:** Why on earth do you say that? She always used to make a beeline for the jams and marmalades at the church fêtes. Mind you, come to think of it, I didn’t see her at the one last month. She makes me laugh the way she says, “You were christened Diana not Di. Use the name God gave you, girl!”

**FRAN:** Yes, that’s my Auntie Maisie. No, she didn’t go to the last fête. I said I’d give her a lift, but she said she needed to stay in as Dominic was coming to visit. Anyway, she doesn’t want any more marmalade as he prefers peanut butter on his toast for breakfast.

**DIANA** *(picking up another box to pack)***:**

What’s breakfast got to do with it? The fête was in the afternoon. Who is Dominic, anyway?

**FRAN:** I’ve never met him, Di. I think he’s a second cousin from down south. He may stay over some nights. I believe Auntie Maisie has given him a key. She’s often saying what a good boy he is and how he helps around the house. He’s well over six foot apparently and likes to work out. She’s let him put some gym equipment and a few other bits in the dining room. There’s some plants in the spare room, too. It’s one of their little secrets or something. *(She sits down with her mug of tea)*

**DIANA:** Where’s she eating her meals then? Didn’t you mention how small her kitchen is?

**FRAN:** She says she’s spending most of her time in the living room and Dominic says it’s safer if she doesn’t do much cooking. He cooks for her when he’s there.

**DIANA:** But she likes cooking. Great cakes.

**FRAN:** It appears she’s finding it more difficult with her arthritis these days. I keep offering to go round and shop for her or have a chat, but she says she can manage and Dominic will shop, although the shopping bill can be more than normal even though she is eating less. Anyway, she needs to withdraw more from the bank for shopping and Dominic tends to go to the bank for her. She does have a mobility scooter and used to get out quite a bit.

**DIANA:** Doesn’t she use it to go out now?

**FRAN:** I don’t believe so, no. Apparently it has a problem and Dominic says it’s not

worth fixing and a new one will be far too expensive for her. I’ve said Matthew would go round and have a look at it, but she’s adamant that’s not necessary.

**DIANA** *(sitting down with a mug of tea and a packet of biscuits which she offers to Fran)***:**

Want one?

**FRAN** *(shaking her head)***:**

No, thanks. I thought you were trying to cut down.

**DIANA** *(laughing)***:**

Not chocolate digestives! So, when did you last see Auntie Maisie exactly? I mean in person.

**FRAN:** A couple of months ago if I’m honest. She doesn’t seem to like me just dropping round anymore. She just wants to use the phone at specific times. She used to use the internet quite a bit and we’d skype every week. She was even on a few Zoom meetings with MU, remember? Now she doesn’t want any of our members visiting at the moment. I think there’s something wrong with her computer. She says Dominic is looking into it when he has time.

**DIANA:** What happened when you did see her? How did she seem?

**FRAN:** Well, I have to say the house was a bit cold. She was using one of those throws to keep her warm. I asked her where she got it from and she said that Dominic had bought it as a gift as she couldn’t find the money she had put aside for heating bills and the council tax. She said Dominic thought she might be getting forgetful. I told her that was ridiculous. She’s normally as bright as a button. She was quite withdrawn and jumpy actually, lost a lot of her spark. I think she may have had a fall.

**DIANA:** Really. That’s a bit worrying. What makes you think that?

**FRAN:** She had bruises on her wrist. She said it was nothing, just slipped when going to the bathroom. It seems Dominic thought it wasn’t bad enough to call the doctor.

**DIANA:** Have you tried to speak to Dominic, get to know him?

**FRAN:** Oh yes, definitely. He always uses a mobile according to Auntie Maisie and he was a rather annoyed when she gave me his number. He’d lost his old mobile and Auntie has been paying for this new one.

**DIANA:** That’s a bit weird, isn’t it?

**FRAN:** It is, yes. Matthew thinks so, too. I have had a brief conversation with Dominic. He says he’s from Uncle Teddy’s side of the family. According to him he only visits Auntie Maisie once in a while and she probably forgets how often he has been. His work commitments are all over the country so it means he can’t really say when he would be around to meet up.

**DIANA:** What does he do exactly?

**FRAN:** He says he’s in logistics, hence the travel. Auntie Maisie pays for his petrol to help when he visits. *(She stands and continues packing her box)*

**DIANA:** No way. You mentioned something about Maisie’s heating bills and council tax. Has she had trouble paying them? *(She joins Fran packing)*

**FRAN:** When I last saw her, she said Dominic had said he would sort it when she couldn’t find the money she’d put aside to pay into the bank. She muttered something about power of attorney. Wouldn’t let me help with any paperwork. There was hardly any new post. Normally she would have had things from the doctor or the NHS, appointments and things.

**DIANA:** Doesn’t she need medication for her arthritis?

**FRAN:** As a rule. She says she’s doing some exercises Dominic has shown her and she shouldn’t need medication or a visit to the doctor if she looks after herself and eats the proper food. She’s seen Dominic takes some pills, special vitamins, but they wouldn’t be right for her.

**DIANA:** It doesn’t sound as if she’s having much of a decent diet for an elderly lady. You need more fruit in that box. *(She hands Fran some bananas)*

**FRAN:** I’ve offered to cook up some meals for her freezer but she says she hasn’t got room anymore and not to bother. I did leave some meals on the doorstep the other day but she said she never had them.

**DIANA:** Why are you leaving things on the doorstep? You’ve got a key.

**FRAN:** The lock’s been changed since Dominic‘s been around. He told Auntie Maisie her front door wasn’t secure enough and she needed better locks. He’s supposed to be getting me a key. No sign of it yet. Last time I was in the house I noticed there were some new locks on a couple of doors inside. Better security, apparently. One was on the living room door.

**DIANA:** What about finalizing your Uncle Teddy’s paperwork? Doesn’t that still need doing?

**FRAN:** Dominic has been helping tidy up the bureau and going through Uncle Teddy’s old documents. There were some things that needed Auntie Maisie’s signature she said. She doesn’t think she has many assets, which surprises me. Uncle Teddy was quite well off.

**DIANA:** Elderly people don’t often realise the value of their assets. *(She stretches her back)*

We’ve been doing this for a couple of hours**.** My back aches.

**FRAN:** Mine too. Auntie said there wasn’t a lot in her account. She thought there should be more and she had asked Dominic to take her to the bank to talk to someone when he wasn’t too busy, but that had been a while ago. She hasn’t been as far as I know.

**DIANA:** Why hasn’t she asked you or Matthew to take her?

**FRAN:** She said she felt silly and didn’t want to bother us. Dominic was doing his best and would be upset if she involved us. It was almost as if she was ashamed.

**DIANA:** Poor Auntie Maisie. Things don’t seem right.

**FRAN:** No, I think she may have trusted Dominic too soon. After all, she has only recently just met him and she’s vulnerable after losing Uncle Teddy, much as she doesn’t want to think so. Matthew and I will make sure this is sorted out before things get any worse.

**DIANA** *(picking up a box)***:**

 Why don’t you take one of these boxes round to her? It will help start a conversation going. Do you want me to come with you? We could go now. I’ve got time before I pick up the grandchildren.

**FRAN:** *(picking up the mugs)***:**

That would be good, thanks. I’ll rinse these quickly first. Don’t forget your biscuits. *(She puts the packet on top of Diana’s box)* I do hope Auntie will let us in. If Dominic’s there………….. *(She shrugs)*

*Exit All*

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**Scam and Opportunity - Script**

*Three ladies have just taken part in a group walk and are sitting outside in the sun relaxing and having a chat. All three have a backpack and bottles of water which they sip from time to time.*

**Props:** *Table/bench and three seats.* ***Annie****: mobile phone,* ***Polly****: sunglasses,* ***Viv****: sandwiches*

**VIV:** It’s a relief to sit down. *(She takes a sip of water)* How far did we walk today?

**ANNIE** *(looking at her wrist)***:**

About five miles according to my Fitbit. How are your feet?

**POLLY:** Mine ache. So much for new walking shoes, 50% off or not.

**VIV:** These so-called sales are never what they seem. I’m sure they put the original price up before marking up a reduction.

**POLLY:** You’re such a cynic, Viv. Always questioning people’s motives.

**VIV:** Well, you do have to be careful these days. Too many people try to take advantage if you ask me. *(She gets sandwiches out of her backpack and offers them round. Polly shakes her head)*

**ANNIE** *(laughing)***:**

No thanks.We didn’t ask you, but you’re quite right, don’t you think so, Poll?

**POLLY:** Absolutely. *(She removes her sunglasses and waves them about)* Gucci. Bought them off the internet, great price. Hey, Viv, do you remember how you got caught out by that scam going around a few years ago? Email supposedly from Jean. *(She puts on a funny voice)* “Please help, I’m stuck in Greece. Can you send me £400 to get home. I’m desperate.”

**VIV:** I certainly wouldn’t fall for that again. I lost everything on my computer for weeks.

**ANNIE:** Can’t be doing with all those pop ups when I’m on the internet, though I do like to see what some are about and I really don’t understand when it says a site is insecure.

**VIV:** It’s probably something to do with your internet connection being dodgy.

**POLLY:** Well, sometimes you get a phone call telling you there’s a problem with your computer and they can fix it over the phone.

**ANNIE:** Oh, I didn’t know that. Could be useful. *(She takes her mobile phone out of her backpack and checks it)*

**VIV:** Also, what sort of virus can you catch by being on the computer? That’s just silly.

I use a disinfectant wipe on the keys every time I use it, just to be on the safe side. *(She takes a bite of sandwich)*

**POLLY:** Good idea, but listen. My neighbour told me a funny thing the other day. Not funny really, as he was rather shaken up by it, especially as he’d been worried by a call about paying his TV licence earlier in the day. Poor Jim.

**VIV:** Oh dear, what was up?

**POLLY:** Well, Jim’s quite elderly and lives alone. He answered the door about 7.00pm last Tuesday evening and the young man standing on the doorstep asked him if he’d taken a parcel in for him. He said he lived further up the road and had been out at work when his parcel arrived. He said the delivery man had left a note that the parcel was with a neighbour. Jim took the chain off the door so that he could see the chap more clearly, saying he didn’t have it. The man got quite aggressive, asking him if he was sure, was there someone else in the house who might have taken it in, was there someone in next door, could Jim just check round the back. Jim managed to shut the door just in time as the man made as if to try and come in.

**ANNIE:** How awful. Poor Jim. Did he report it?

**POLLY:** No, he didn’t bother. I like Jim. He always lets us borrow the ladder he keeps propped up by his back door. We can just pop round and fetch it whenever we want. We used it to get through the bathroom window when he locked himself out. Perhaps I will have a sandwich. Thanks, Viv.

**VIV** *(offering Polly a sandwich)***:**

There are so many deliveries with online shopping. I’ve started putting a note on the door when I go out saying where to leave them.

**ANNIE:** Have you still got that spare key under that lovely boxwood by your front door?

**VIV:** Oh yes. I can’t get shut outside in my dressing gown like I did before. So embarrassing. Serves me right for falling asleep downstairs. At least I’d left the curtains open and a light on so I didn’t trip over when I woke up suddenly to the sound of the milkman!

**POLLY:** My sister loves online shopping. The bank phoned her up the other day checking on a purchase she’d made on Amazon. She needed to confirm all her details so they could process the payment. They did that the week before asking to approve a new payee. She didn’t give her details that time as she didn’t recognise the name.

**ANNIE** *(checking her phone)***:**

My bank phoned to say someone had illegally accessed my account and asked me to transfer my money over into a safe one. I’ve had a few emails and texts as well, asking me to update details. The latest was from the NHS, Track and Trace, saying I need to have Covid test done at home, click here. They want £500 sent for a home test. I got one done locally. All clear, fortunately.

**VIV:** That’s good to hear. You know Veronica? She had someone call at the house saying they were conducting Covid tests. Could be a good thing. Not sure how much she paid.

**POLLY:** Going back to my sister, she’s had money go missing from her account. Some small amounts to begin with, but then there was something for a new TV. John Lewis contacted her to see if she did actually want it delivering to an address in London rather than hers.

**VIV:** That doesn’t sound good. I hope she cancelled the order. I’ve had some text messages like you, Annie. I’d clicked on a link on one before I realised it wasn’t even my bank! Don’t suppose it mattered. I also had an email from Royal Mail the other day to say there was £2.99 to pay on a parcel before they could deliver it. I didn’t want anything sent back so of course I paid it. My phone’s been doing some funny stuff since then, come to think of it.

**ANNIE:** My old boss had the police call him saying there had been fraud on his account, they’d arrested someone and that they’d put him through to a secure line to his bank so it could be sorted out.

**POLLY:** Thank goodness they arrested someone.

**VIV:** Yes, that was lucky.

**ANNIE:** On the bright side, some people are being really thoughtful lately. So many elderly people had to self-isolate during Covid and some are very lonely anyway.

**POLLY:** It’s such a shame. My Aunt Margaret in Wales has someone to run errands for her. This lady popped round just out of the blue and asked if she could help with shopping or cleaning. Aunt Margaret told me she’d answered a lot of questions over the phone from someone looking at elderly care and requirements. She was expecting someone to call round and give her advice on what she might need installed at home. Must check when that happened.

**VIV:** That’s really kind. You do have to be careful who you let in, mind you. We don’t get as many people selling things at the door now, except the occasional young men with rather overpriced cleaning materials. I usually leave my purse on the vestibule windowsill so it’s easy to get at.

**POLLY:** I do that with my keys so I don’t forget them. Alan leaves his car keys by mine. Did I tell you he’s bought a new Mercedes? Some friendly young lads were taking pictures of it the other day, some project or something. Now Alan’s retired we want to do some home improvements and Alan’s paid a fee for this company to help with the paperwork for the government Green Homes Grant Scheme. He’s given all our details over the phone, really easy.

**ANNIE:** Speaking of keys, I couldn’t find mine for ages on Monday. Guess where they were? Still in the front door from when I’d come back from the gym*. (She checks her phone again)*

The new car sound posh. I am so grateful to the man who called at mine the other day and said there were some tiles loose on my roof and that he had a roofing firm that could fix it quickly for me. What a good job he noticed it. I’ve given him some money upfront to buy the correct materials.

**VIV:** I’m glad the subject of cars has come up. It’s reminded me to answer the text I had from the DVLA about unpaid tax insurance. So when’s the chap coming to fix your roof, Annie?

**ANNIE:** It should have been yesterday, but now it’s next week. *(She looks at her watch)* Can’t stop much longer. Smudge is on her own.

**POLLY:** I’m still waiting to have some trees trimmed back. That firm wanted payment up front as well. I suppose that’s the way it is these days.

**VIV:** We all know that we should ask for official ID before letting anyone into the house, but my friends Helen and Rob had to let someone from the Water Board in very quickly last month.

**ANNIE:** Why was that? *(She holds up her bottle of water)* Speaking of water, I’m nearly out.

**VIV:** Well, they were told the house next door was flooded and they needed to check and turn the water off so it didn’t happen in their house.

**POLLY:** That would have been awful.

**VIV:** I know. The men from the Water Board did check the rest of the house to be on the safe side. They made a bit of a mess in the bedroom and weren’t very polite when Rob asked them to leave. Next door were actually away so Rob wasn’t able to speak to them. I suppose the Water Board turned the water off from outside. Last time I spoke to Helen she was worried they were both getting forgetful as she’d mislaid some jewellery and Rob couldn’t find his wallet. Mind you, he’s probably lost it going to the cash machine. He always keeps it in his back pocket and spend ages counting the cash before letting the next person get to the machine.

**ANNIE:** It’s no good, Viv, those sandwiches smell too good. *(She reaches across and takes one)* A policewoman called at mine last Thursday.

**VIV:** Oooh, Annie. What have you been up to? Did you ask for ID?

**ANNIE:** Stop it. Of course, I didn’t. She was a policewoman. She was asking me about Smudge as there had been some dog thefts in the area. Wanted to know if she was in the house, how old she was, did she go out for walks every day, was she ever alone, was she a pedigree, was she chipped. I answered the questions, she told me to be careful, got into an unmarked car with a plain clothed bloke and drove off.

**POLLY:** It’s good the police are taking an interest.

**ANNIE:** That’s right. Smudge is a lovely little soul. Some women were taking pictures of her in the front garden just yesterday before I took her for her usual walk straight after lunch. There was a piece of white string tied on my freshly painted gate when I got back, which was a nuisance, made a mess. Some kids playing, probably.

**VIV** *(looking at her watch)***:**

Is that the time? I have to get back for a phone call from the pensions people. They’re going to give me a free review over the phone. Then I need to phone my insurance people as I’ve had several letters that I don’t quite understand. It all looks legit. I love their letter headings.

**POLLY** *(patting her stomach)***:**

That sandwich hit the spot. Sounds better than the call I had just recently. HMRC threatening to take me to court over unpaid tax and wanting the money there and then. I told the man I’d look into it and his language was not gentlemanly. Alan was very cross.

**ANNIE:** Oh dear. They were telling me I’d got a tax rebate the other day. Haven’t claimed it yet. I must check if there’s a deadline. *(She checks her phone)* Well girls, I’ve taken up online dating on a site for the over 55’s. I’m so excited I’ve got a date next weekend! Romeo’s a bit short of cash so I’ve given him some for the train fare as he lives in Scotland. I think he’s keen, keeps texting me.

**VIV:** No way. Good for you. Is that why you keep checking your phone? Have you got a photo?

**ANNIE** *(holding out her phone)***:**

There he is. Isn’t he handsome?

**POLLY:** He looks - interesting, Annie. Maybe a bit young? Good luck, anyway.

**VIV:** Right, as I said, I must be off. *(She stands up, putting the remains of her sandwiches in her backpack)* It’s such a lovely day, after I’ve had my phone calls I’m going to open the French windows, let the fresh air in and go upstairs and run a bath for a good soak after this walk. I’ve parked in that private carpark. A really nice man in a yellow jacket asked if he could assist me when I was having a problem paying at the parking meter. Unfortunately, it swallowed my card so I’ll need to order a new one. Nuisance.

**ANNIE** *(stretching and getting up)***:**

 Thinking of fresh air, I left my kitchen window open while we were out so it won’t be stuffy when I get back and Smudge will have some air.

**POLLY** *(standing and putting on her sunglasses)***:**

We tend to leave a window open at night and don’t close the curtains if the nights are too warm. Alan hates being stuffy. Thanks for the sandwich, Viv.

**VIV:** Same time next week ladies? Don’t forget your backpack. Annie. It’s not fastened properly. I can see your iPhone.

*Exit All*

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