

PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Chris Noble
Title of inspection	A Review of Fraud: Time to choose A revisit of the 2018 fraud inspection to assess progress of the recommendations and areas for improvement
Inspectorate	 <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>In 2018, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to carry out a thematic inspection of fraud.</p> <p>We conducted our inspection between March and July 2018. In April 2019, we published <i>Fraud: Time to choose – An inspection of the police response to fraud</i>. In that report, we made 16 recommendations and identified 5 areas for improvement (AFIs).</p> <p>We have revisited our previous inspection to see how the police service has responded to the recommendations and AFIs we made in that report. This report presents our findings on the progress that has been made.</p> <p>Progress against our 2019 recommendations and areas for improvement</p> <p>Only 10 of our 16 recommendations have been implemented. There has been progress on a further two and three remain outstanding. One of the recommendations is no longer relevant.</p> <p>We consider that only one of the AFIs has been dealt with. There has been progress on a further three, and one remains outstanding.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	<p>We have made three further recommendations in this report.</p> <p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>By 30 September 2021, chief constables should make sure that their forces are following the guidance issued by the National Police Chiefs' Council Coordinator for Economic Crime about fraud-related calls for service.</p> <p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>By 31 October 2021, chief constables should adopt the guidance issued in September 2019 by the National Police Chiefs' Council Coordinator for Economic Crime that was aimed at improving the information given to victims when reporting fraud.</p> <p>In our 2019 report, we made the following recommendation:</p> <p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>By 30 September 2019, chief constables should publish their force's policy for responding to and investigating allegations of fraud (in relation to both calls for service and National Fraud Intelligence Bureau disseminations for enforcement).</p> <p>In our previous inspection, we recommended that forces should publish their policies for responding to and investigating fraud. The aim of this recommendation was to make it clear to victims what they can expect when they report a fraud.</p> <p>All the forces we visited have a fraud policy, although some are overdue for review. We found that many specialist fraud investigators have a good knowledge of their force's fraud policy and apply it to their investigations. Among call handlers and non-specialist investigators, this is not always the case. There is often a lack of awareness of the policy and its application to their work.</p>

	<p>We reviewed all 43 forces' websites and found that only 24 have published their policy. Of those 24, we rated 14 either difficult or very difficult to find – and we knew what we were looking for. Members of the public are likely to find it even harder.</p> <p>While some forces have published clear information telling victims what service they will receive when reporting a fraud, many have not. We would urge all forces to do so.</p> <p>This recommendation has been partially implemented.</p>
<p>Areas for improvement</p>	<p>Area for improvement 2</p> <p>In our 2019 report, we identified the following area for improvement: To make improvements in this area, chief constables should ensure that their force improves the identification and mapping of organised crime groups in which the principal criminality is fraud. Since we completed our fieldwork, we have been told that the NCA's fraud intelligence team identifies high-harm fraudsters for further investigation. This will be enhanced by work that the NECC is leading to develop a multi-agency capability to identify fraud OCGs. This is expected to be in place later this year.</p> <p>The Economic Crime Policing Board brings together senior officers from each region and other national agencies that are responsible for investigating economic crime, including fraud. The board has a delivery plan, which we reviewed. It shows that, in many regions, this AFI has not yet been fully implemented. While the progress that we've heard about is encouraging, it's clear that some areas are more advanced than others. More needs to be done to improve the way fraud-related OCGs are identified and mapped.</p> <p>Area for improvement 3</p> <p>In our 2019 report, we identified the following area for improvement: To make improvements in this area, chief constables should ensure that fraudsters are included among those considered for serious organised crime 'prevent' tactics, including by local strategic partnership boards and through integrated offender management processes. This area for improvement has been partially implemented.</p> <p>Area for improvement 4</p> <p>In our 2019 report, we identified the following area for improvement: To make improvements in this area, chief constables should increase their force's use of ancillary orders against fraudsters. This area for improvement has been partially implemented.</p> <p>Area for improvement 5</p> <p>In our 2019 report, we identified the following area for improvement: To make improvements in this area, chief constables should ensure that their force complies with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime when investigating fraud. This area for improvement has not been implemented.</p>

Police Crime and Commissioner's initial response

Policing in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent continues to evolve as the nature of crime continues to change. With fewer neighbourhood crimes such as burglary and theft but more crimes against the person, there is a greater focus on protecting people from harm. Complex issues such as child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, online fraud and managing public protests have become 'business as usual' for our police service with local police teams increasingly addressing issues caused by societal problems such as domestic abuse, missing persons, mental health concerns and substance misuse.

I will commission prevention and early intervention programmes for those more vulnerable to crime (domestic abuse, sexual assault and abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, hate crime, road crime, online fraud, cybercrime) or ASB.

I will also provide a range of free, confidential, non-discriminatory, specialist support services for victims and witnesses of crime (including domestic abuse, sexual assault and abuse, violence, exploitation, hate crime, road crime, harmful sexual behaviour, business crime, restorative justice, online fraud and cybercrime) and ASB.

Chief Constable's response

Policing in Staffordshire continues to need to evolve to address the changing environment of criminality. As more of our lives have a digital online presence the types of crimes impacting on the Staffordshire community have changed. Part of that picture is fraud where a large majority of offences are online offences. Therefore, the force embrace the inspections conducted by HMICFRS and the recommendations made.

The force will continue to work alongside the City of London Police who are the Lead Force for Fraud to address the areas of improvement. Staffordshire Police will ensure that Victims of crime are supported in line with the Victims Code of Practice.

The force will utilise a wide range of powers to ensure that those offenders impacting most on victims are prevented from committing further offences.

Preventing offences and reducing opportunities for criminals to commit crime are a key part of Staffordshire Police strategy to protect the public of Staffordshire against fraud offences.

Police and Crime Commissioner's overall comments

Through ongoing tracking of action plans with Staffordshire Police I am satisfied that the force are following the guidance issued by the National Police Chiefs' Council Coordinator for Economic Crime about fraud-related calls for service and have published their fraud policy on the Staffordshire Police website with the aim of making it clear to victims what they can expect.

As chair of the Local Criminal Justice Partnership Board, I continue to monitor Staffordshire police and partner compliance with the Victims Code of Practice for fraud offences.

In addition, I will continue to monitor the outcomes of fraud investigations and the impact of prevention and intervention programmes through performance management arrangements and update the public at regular public performance meetings.