



Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Cc: HMICFRS

Our Ref: JC/jpi

13th June 2019

Dear Home Secretary,

National HMICFRS report – ‘Fraud: Time to Choose an inspection of the police response to fraud’

I am writing to you in response to the HMICFRS Fraud inspection report published in April 2019. I welcome publication of this report which identifies the need for an improved national and regional response to tackling fraud in order to ensure victims are receiving the level of service they deserve.

The report contains two specific recommendations for all Chief Constables along with a number of areas for improvement (AFI). West Mercia Police supports the recommendations contained within the report and work is taking place under the leadership of one of our ACC's to address the recommendations and other areas of improvement identified. I am satisfied with the force response to date and provide a brief outline below.

Recommendation 2: *By 31 March 2020, the National Police Chiefs' Council Coordinator for Economic Crime and Chief Constables should ensure that forces have processes in place to accurately and efficiently report fraud outcomes to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau.*

The force have an Action Fraud (AF) Working Group which seeks to monitor issues related to AF and to ensure the force is continually try to improve outcome data. Checks are also being undertaken to ensure the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau process is being adhered to.

Recommendation 9: *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).*

Whilst the force does not currently have a published strategy on its policy for responding to Fraud there are established processes in place to investigate all frauds which are a call for service and NFIB disseminations. Allocation of investigations from calls for service and NFIB Disseminations is undertaken by the Crime Bureau, usually meaning cases are allocated initially to patrol and then escalated to Local Investigation or the Serious Fraud Team if deemed appropriate. I understand further work is being considered around the introduction of an appropriate Fraud Investigation Model Triage Process.

Areas or improvement

1. *Chief Constables should improve the way their force uses the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau monthly victim lists to identify and support vulnerable victims and others who require additional support;*

The force has been piloting a scheme to identify the most vulnerable victims of fraud within the NFIB data, in order to offer them additional support/crime prevention via their SNT (Op Hazel). This is currently operating in the North Worcestershire Local Policing area. Additionally in April this year I launched my newly commissioned victim advice line, VAL seeking to provide a more consistent and seamless support service for victims of crime. Work is now underway to see how the support provided by Op Hazel can be brought into the VAL model to provide wider support to all fraud victims.

2. *Chief Constables should ensure their forces improve the identification and mapping of organised crime groups in which the principal criminality is fraud;*

Over the last year the force has developed a much more rigorous approach to the identification and mapping of organised crime groups (OCGs) as part of its work to improve its overall approach to serious and organised crime (SOC). I have maintained close scrutiny of the SOC improvement work and am reassured that the force is doing everything it can to improve this and there is a recognition that more can be done to better identify fraud OCGs using the NFIB profiles and other data.

3. *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;*

From my oversight of the SOC improvements I am satisfied that the force is seeking to apply 'prevent' tactics to address fraudsters and I have been informed that two Serious Crime Prevention Orders have been applied for in relation to one OCG. SOCJAGs are being further developed and strengthened as a result of the SOC work and it is recognised that these provide an opportunity to target fraudsters.

4. *Chief Constables should increase their force's use of ancillary orders against fraudsters;*

The Force actively seeks asset recovery (cash seizure, restraint and confiscation) for fraud cases and is starting to more widely use new orders available to it.

5. *Chief Constables should ensure that their force complies with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime when investigating fraud.*

Fraud cases can be problematic with lengthy and complex investigations involving multiple victims. I have been informed that processes are in place to ensure code compliance and that it would be written into the fraud policy as part of the response to recommendation 9 above.

I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure all the issues identified are addressed to provide victims of fraud with the service they deserve.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'JC' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Campion
Police & Crime Commissioner
West Mercia

