17th September 2021

I welcome the spotlight report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 'A review of Fraud: Time to Choose' on the 5th August 2021.

Fraud is a crime that is committed in many different forms and is becoming increasingly sophisticated. The pandemic has shifted more services online opening up more opportunities for criminals to commit offences. Regardless of the method used by perpetrators, there is no doubt it has devastating outcomes for victims both financially and emotionally.

Recognising this, I have given significant focus in my Police and Crime Plan to preventing and tackling fraud and protecting vulnerable people in our communities. I will ensure that the Constabulary work with key partners such as Action Fraud and the North West Fraud Forum to deliver dedicated anti-fraud campaigns to identify and tackle new fraud issues.

The report rightly notes that more should be done to make improvements in fraud processes and deliver justice for victims. I have discussed the findings with the Chief Constable and have asked for their response to the recommendations from HMICFRS. I note that some of the recommendations are due to be completed in the very near future and I will be ensuring the Constabulary are complaint.

Recommendations

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.

An Action Plan has been set to meet this recommendation. A further meeting is scheduled on 23rd September to follow up the actions set to ensure implementation. In summary, Force Control Centre (FCC) FAQs have been updated and a briefing sent to all staff to remind them of the process and to ensure a consistent approach. The FCC Quality Assurance team will support and ensure staff are following the guidance.

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. An Action Plan has been set to meet this recommendation. A further meeting is scheduled on 23rd Sept to follow up the actions set to ensure implementation.

FCC supervision will brief local crime hub sergeants on the Victim's Code of Practice (VCOP) requirements. Compliance will be checked by our Service Improvement Team with results fed through to Senior Leadership Teams via Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs).

Areas for Improvement

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.

Cheshire Constabulary have a dedicated fraud protect officer who reviews the weekly victim list and triages the support required for every victim of fraud and implements that support via one of the following channels:

- *a personal visit by our network of fraud champions*
- *contact from Cheshire Cares*
- *contact from National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit*
- *contact via email direct to victim.*

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

The Economic Crime Unit (ECU) team are aware of the need to identify and map fraud Organised Crime Groups (OCG) and several have been mapped by Cheshire. Ongoing compliance will be monitored through "Raising the Bar" and the QPR process.

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.

The Constabulary participate in the North West Strategic Governance Group with other North West forces to share best practice.

There is active engagement in National operations lead by the City of London Police to target courier fraud (Op Radium) and romance Fraud (Op Tonic).

Financial intelligence is used to identify those that might be engaged in serious organised crime

Work is done with schools and colleges to divert those who might be susceptible to becoming involved in Serious Organised Crime (SOC), in particular focusing on not becoming a money mule, which is a huge fraud enabler.

The Constabulary make effective use of all media to warn communities of emerging fraud threats.

ECU are the lead for all Electoral Malpractice offences, and we conduct a series of engagement events in the lead up to all local and national elections.

Offenders are actively targeted who have outstanding confiscation orders (Op Archery)

An in-house asset recovery team has been developed who use civil orders to target criminals who have accrued wealth by unknown means.

Chief constables should increase their force's use of ancillary orders against fraudsters.

Cheshire Constabulary are very good at utilising financial investigators to consider Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) orders against convicted fraudsters to recover money/assets for victims via POCA compensation orders. Every opportunity is seized.

ECU will always consider ancillary orders convicted fraudsters as a tactical option, for example disqualification of company directors, Financial Reporting Orders and Serious Crime prevention Orders, albeit ancillary orders are applied for by the Crown Prosecution Service and a strict criterion applies.

Chief constables should ensure that their force complies with the VCOP when investigating fraud.

Cheshire Constabulary prioritise victims of crime under Op Proportionate. There are strict processes in place to ensure crimes are recorded appropriately. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we have engaged with colleagues in North Wales and Merseyside who have good practice.

**John Dwyer
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire**