



Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Norfolk Constabulary published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Section 55 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days

Inspection Title:	Fraud: Time to Choose An inspection of the police response to fraud
Date Published:	2 nd April 2019
Type of Inspection:	Thematic Inspection

KEY FINDINGS:

In 2018, the Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to carry out an inspection of the police response to fraud. HMICFRS inspected the effectiveness and efficiency of the police response to fraud, including online fraud. This inspection took place between March and July 2018 and looked to assess whether:

- law enforcement has a well-designed strategy for tackling fraud;
- organisational structures provide the necessary capacity, capabilities and partnerships; and
- victims of fraud receive a high-quality response.

The report, '[Fraud: Time to Choose](#)', found that most victims of fraud are not receiving the level of service they deserve and makes clear the choice that needs to be made. Leaders in government and the police service can either continue to respond to fraud in an inconsistent manner or they can act to ensure that there is a clearer strategy, less variation in service between forces and better communication with the public.

HMICFRS recognised that a lot of changes have been made over many years to improve structures and processes, particularly at the national level. But it remains the case that, outside those organisations that have a specific national-level responsibility for fraud, it is rarely seen as a priority. Competing priorities only make it more important that processes are efficient, and performance must be managed to provide the best possible service that available resources will allow, especially as people are more likely to be victims of fraud than any other crime.

HMICFRS found that the current model of local investigations supported by national functions is the right one and found examples of some excellent work that is being done to tackle fraudsters and support their victims, particularly at a local level. But the police need a much more coordinated national approach with clear roles and responsibilities, clear operating procedures and a commitment to provide resources for the long term. Sadly, they found too many examples of processes that are inefficient and organisations that are not being properly held to account for their performance. As a result, many victims of fraud are not receiving the level of service they deserve.

Headline findings include:

- the law enforcement response to fraud is disjointed and ineffective
- roles and responsibilities are not clear
- there are pockets of good prevention work
- existing organisational structures are not working well, and
- vulnerable victims receive a good service but most victims do not

HMICFRS were told by one officer, "fraud does not bang, bleed, or shout". Faced with those choices, chief constables and police and crime commissioners have difficult decisions to make.



CHIEF CONSTABLE RESPONSE TO REPORT AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:

We welcome the HMICFRS report on Fraud which is a complex area of policing and one that has changed more as a consequence of the widespread adoption of an 'online life' than perhaps any other. HMICFRS quite rightly recognise that fraud is a crime like no other and highlighted a number of pressures that this causes on a national policing model built largely on the presumption that the victim of a crime and the offender will have been in the same place, or at least at an identifiable place, at the time the crime was committed. HMICFRS recommended that the UK continues with a lead-force model for formulating national strategic responses and Norfolk would support that approach.

HMICFRS also raised the issue of resourcing for fraud investigations and suggested that more resources could be allocated to them. This is of course true but the reality on the front line is that in order to do so resources would have to be taken from other areas of policing. Norfolk are moving towards a new 'hubs' model of delivering serious crime investigations that will in the future allow detectives to be used more efficiently and with greater support in dealing with the large volumes of digital data that are now associated to almost every fraud case. Once we reach this new model it will become easier to surge either detective or other investigatory resources to crimes causing significant harm, including fraud.

HMICFRS recognised the role that Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) have to play in combatting fraud and the importance of effective tasking processes from local to national scales. Norfolk engages with the Eastern Region Specialist Operations Unit (ERSOU) through both formal tasking mechanisms and informal discussions. We also engage with the Regional Fraud Co-Ordinator on a regular basis in support of their efforts to reduce the impact of fraud on victims.

HMICFRS also recognised the importance of local safeguarding arrangements to protect vulnerable individuals from becoming victims, or repeated victims, of fraud offences. In Norfolk we have created Operation Bodyguard which we would state is an effective example of working in partnership as described by HMICFRS and we will continue to support this initiative. This operation is now supported by the Scams Prevention Co-Ordinator commissioned by the OPCCN which it is hoped will enable its wider roll-out to a large number of victims.

PCC RESPONSE TO REPORT AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:

During 2018 I became a Friends Against Scams 'Scambassador' and having my own experience of falling victim to a scam I am acutely aware of the emotional and financial hurt of being a victim of a scam can cause. I remain committed to doing all I can to make Norfolk a scam-free county and prevent people's lives being affected by the acts of these heartless fraudsters and have funded a Scams Prevention Coordinator to work within the Norfolk and Suffolk Victim Care Service.

I welcome the HMICFRS report on fraud and received an update from the Chief Constable at my last Police Accountability Forum on the 14th May 2019 detailing his plans to address the findings and recommendations within the report. I will continue to scrutinise progress through my public accountability meetings with the reports being publicly available through my website.

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- ✓ Response forwarded to the Home Office
- ✓ Response forwarded to HMICFRS
- ✓ Response published on the OPCCN website
- ✓ Response forwarded to Chief Constable
- ✓ Response forwarded to Police and Crime Panel