

Thematic Briefing

Fraud and Scams

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1.0 Background / Context

- 1.1 This thematic briefing will concentrate on work in the Fraud Protect arena which directly impacts on vulnerable victims of Fraud in Lincolnshire, which sits at Tier Two Vulnerability on the Force Control Strategy.
- 1.2 Fraud Protect work feeds into the Chiefs strategy under the Protect from Harm and Help those in Need objectives and we directly impact in these two areas by assisting communities to feel safe, working with our partners to ensure we work together to give people in Lincolnshire a higher standard of care and stop them becoming future victims of Fraud.

2.0 Developments over last 6-12 months

- 2.1 We have established partnerships and networks both regionally and nationally where we continue develop best practise with less duplication. We specifically have a Trading Standards Fraud Protect Intervention Officer who works within the police Protect team to assist our High Harm victims who are reluctant to believe a scam has occurred.
- 2.2 Op Revive is our volunteer fraud protect team and is about to be rebranded after updated training and a return from Covid. It is now focused on intervention with vulnerable victims affected by fraud rather than other crime types – going forward this will make our volunteers more skilled in the work they carry out in the community which will have greater impact. This program aims to get victims back into the community which lessens the feeling of isolation and loneliness and make them stronger to challenge future fraudsters.
- 2.3 We have temporarily increased our Protect team to include one Police Officer which has allowed us to carry out a greater number of high-risk visits ensuring our victims receive the highest standard of safeguarding expediently which should stop them becoming future victims. This role also allows for more intelligence gathering, investigation of National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) disseminations and safeguarding referrals, which in turn mean our victims get a higher level of service and we identify and prosecute more Lincolnshire offences. We are aiming to maintain this role within the department.
- 2.4 We continue to work with our communication teams and partners to ensure our media messages are relevant and up to date.

3.0 Current Position / Performance (where applicable)

- 3.1 Since January 2022, Lincolnshire have received 4077 Action Fraud reports relating to monies lost within our county – these only reflect the victims who have reported. From these figures we have identified 477 high-risk victims who have all received a visit by a neighbourhood officer or the Fraud protect team and some form of intervention, and 576 medium-risk victims, who have had a form of communication alongside a Fraud booklet to raise their knowledge of fraud. All victims are now on Lincolnshire Police systems so we can identify future risk quicker.
- 3.2 We currently have 34 call blocker units currently deployed in victims houses across the county which during the month of September have blocked 497 Scam calls. These have been funded by the OPCC and Trading Standards. These numbers are lower than we would like and we continue to identify victims to have them fitted.
- 3.3 Our Fraud Protect engagement officer is continuously out in communities delivering awareness to community groups and professionals. Recent inputs have been given to Adult Social Care, Victim Lincs and Age UK to raise the knowledge within our communities.
- 3.4 We continue to better understand and educate communities in high harm fraud's such as Courier Fraud, Investment Fraud and Romance Fraud where we see the greatest monetary losses.

4.0 Forward look 6-12 months

- 4.1 We will look to evaluate the impact and wellbeing of victims of Fraud post Op Revive intervention as well as undertake 3-6 months reviews post fitting of call blocker units within victims houses to see if we can identify changes in behaviour.
- 4.2 Following a recent national Fraud Protect conference, we are entering into a piece of work with local university students to ensure we are using the right language to combat Fraud.
- 4.3 The Fraud Protect engagement officer will continue to host talks in community hubs and will look to host surgery's within the warm spaces that will begin to roll out in winter 22/23.

4.4 We will continue to assess ourselves against the Action Fraud data to ensure we are communicating the right messages for our county on the right media platforms.

5.0 Issues of Exception – Opportunities / Risks

5.1 With the cost-of-living crisis we will see more vulnerabilities alongside greater levels of unemployment, which will create more opportunities for Fraudsters. It will also open the market around crypto currency and ‘get rich quick’ pyramid schemes.

5.2. As technology advances so do the sophistication of scams and the role of the fraudster. We need to try and get ahead of the curve and raise our own knowledge and understanding. Greater partnership working will be required along with stronger terms of reference around information sharing.

6.0 Key Public Messages

6.1 There is a scam for everyone regardless of vulnerabilities so always check before committing to an unknown process. The ‘Take Five’ campaign encourages the public to think and discuss with others before committing to a process and to carry out checks regarding the genuineness of “too good to be true” offers.

6.2 If you have been a victim of Fraud, please report it to the relevant agency, as this will give us a better understanding of the scale of the fraud and vital intelligence to enable us to identify offenders.