

**‘A REVIEW OF FRAUD: TIME TO CHOOSE’ PUBLISHED BY HMICFRS ON 5TH AUGUST 2021
AVON & SOMERSET PCC REPOSE DATED 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021**

Fraud is a priority for me personally and I have taken on the national lead for economic and cybercrime on behalf of the Association of PCCs. Fraud will also feature highly in the Police and Crime Plan I am developing for Avon and Somerset.

The report highlights that *“adults are still more likely to be a victim of fraud than any other crime.”* This shows the scale of the problem and one that affects individuals and businesses alike.

Victims are a focus here to ensure that when they report these crimes they receive the proper support and information, particularly to prevent them from being victimised again. The recommendations for the Chief Constable recognise the importance of this.

I want to try and make communities more resilient and resistant to crime. I will use my national role to try and improve the prevention of fraud to reduce the number of first time victims as well as repeat victims. To achieve this forces and other law enforcement agencies should work together locally, regionally and nationally to learn from one another and adopt best practice.

Recommendation 1

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.

Recommendation 3

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.

The Constabulary follow the guidance set out by the NPCC Coordinator for Economic Crime in respect of both of these recommendations. Below provides some additional detail.

Recommendation 1

The Constabulary have written their own Fraud Policy based on national guidance. This is published on their intranet, readily available for the workforce to find and access. This is in the process of being updated in line with their new crime allocation process. This new version will also include an easy to understand 'call for service flow chart' which has been adapted from a National Fraud Intelligence Bureau document.

The staff who take calls have already received training on fraud and will receive additional training by the end of 2021. Enhanced training is also being provided to the officers who work in the Incident Assessment Unit. The Constabulary have also implemented a new Integrated Voice Recognition so that when people call them a number of automated questions will help determine if the caller needs to speak to somebody in Avon and Somerset or if they should be directed to Action Fraud instead. It should be noted all calls relating to the Banking Protocol – i.e. from bank branch staff suspecting a customer is a victim of fraud – are treated as a priority and an officer will be despatched.

Supervisors in the Fraud Team will do a daily triage of all fraud occurrences on the Constabulary's crime recording system (Niche). The supervisors are then able to discuss the cases with the Officer in Charge to ensure vulnerability has been properly assessed, the right level of service is being provided and, where necessary, investigative strategies can be set.

Recommendation 3

The Constabulary aim to provide some level of service to every report relating to fraud and cases sent to them by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau. As none of these are filed at source victims are provided with more information. The training mentioned above has a real focus on victim contact to try and improve these standards.

The fraud team have specialist roles that work with vulnerable victims of fraud role and more broadly with victims providing information and advice to help prevent them from being victimised again.

Investment in officers and staff is being made in this area. A new 'Volume Fraud' Team is also being implemented so as to improve the service given to victims of fraud. This will mean these fraud cases are dealt with by this specialist team with the relevant expertise; whereas at the moment they are usually dealt with by frontline Patrol officers. Special Constables are being trained specifically to work in cybercrime, which fraud often is. This will also increase the available expertise to help victims and businesses stay safe.

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