Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee report

A review of work to tackle to Fraud, including its impact on vulnerable individuals during the Pandemic.

Safer
Lincolnshire
Partnership

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
Working for a better future

Prevalence of fraud is increasing

- [Action Fraud](#) (the public-facing national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre) 'reported a **27% rise in fraud offences** (to 413,417 offences) compared with the year ending September 2020'.

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 National Crime Survey [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)](#) states that "**Fraud estimates do not follow the trend of falling victimisation** seen in other crime types over the lockdown periods'.

Fraud is a priority for LCC and the SLP

- Fraud prevention work in Lincolnshire is well developed

- Reflecting on the Corporate Plan, the activities highlighted in the report show the steps being taken to enable everyone to live life to the full.

- Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP) Fraud Core Priority Group has been tasked to focus on prevention activity around digitally enabled fraud and ID Theft, to ensure our residents are informed and better able to protect themselves from being a victim or repeat victim of fraud.

Fraud can affect anyone, but our vulnerable residents are most at risk

- Vulnerability can include age, locality, digital skills and social connections.

- Fraud has been shown to have a significant impact on vulnerable victims, not only financially but on their health and wellbeing.

- Lincolnshire County Council's responsibilities extend into the Care Act 2014 and place a duty on us to protect adults from financial abuse.

Advances in technology are transforming fraud in scale and form

- Examples include romance fraud is perpetrated through social media and through dating apps, investment fraud is committed via fake websites and rogue traders take advantage of online marketplaces and recommendation websites.

- The Lincolnshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner survey in 2021 PCC Annual Survey Results (lincolnshire-pcc.gov.uk) shows that 13% of respondents reported being a victim of online crime or identity theft and 13% reported being a victim of a telephone scam within the previous 12 months.

- Concerningly 64% of adults surveyed were 'very or fairly worried' about being a victim of online identity fraud.

Prevention activity has been targeted and varied to meet with the needs of our community

- This ranges from social and traditional media to frontline staff awareness training, community events, 121 visits and postal correspondence.

- As part of the Safer Together Partnership with LCC, Lincolnshire Police employ a Fraud Prevention Officer to lead on prevention activity across the County. This role compliments the LCC role of Scams Prevention and Intervention Officer.

Partnership working is key – no organisation can tackle fraud successfully alone

- Lincolnshire was a founding partner in the pilot for the now Home Office Multi-Agency Approach to Fraud supported by the NTSST. Pilot led to the establishment of the SLP Fraud Core Priority Group as we know it today.

- Wide membership from a range of organisations including County and Districts Councils, Lincolnshire Police, voluntary sector agencies, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Victim Lincs, Victim Support and the banking industry.

Victims need client-centred support to avoid repeat victimisation and support health and wellbeing

- In the period April 2021 to March 2022, the LCC Scams Prevention and Intervention Officer has supported 70 individuals who were considered most vulnerable to prevent further victimisation.

- Call blockers and No cold calling zones are tools that empower potential victims to protect themselves.

Conclusion:

- This report demonstrates the contribution Lincolnshire County Council is making to the fraud agenda within the County and the efforts being taken to keep vulnerable people safe.

- For additional information on fraud and scams please go to [Become a Friend Against Scams by completing the Online Learning course, then "Take a Stand Against Scams" (friendsagainstscams.org.uk)](friendsagainstscams.org.uk)

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