

<b>Committee:</b> Economic and Cyber Crime Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 03 October 2022
<b>Subject:</b> National Lead Force Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	1
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	N/A
<b>If so, how much?</b>	NA
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	NA
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	NA
<b>Report of:</b> Commissioner of Police Pol 83-22	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Peter O'Doherty Assistant Commissioner, National Co-ordinator for Economic and Cyber Crime.	

## SUMMARY

This report provides information on key activities delivered as part of the National Lead Force Plan. These activities include:

- Improvements to Action Fraud reporting
- National protect campaigns to tackle online shopping and romance fraud
- Continued coordination of Project Otello activity
- Multiple arrests for courier fraud
- Force and PCC engagement

### Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

## MAIN REPORT

### BACKGROUND

1. The National Lead Force Plan was approved by Police Authority Board in October 2020. Detail was given around new plans at the previous ECCC in September. The new performance measures are now in place and present on the accompanying performance report.

## CURRENT POSITION

### **Outcome 1: Supporting and Safeguarding Victims.**

**NLF Role: We provide a service for victims that is accessible, user-friendly and easy to engage with, and we successfully support and safeguard victims.**

### **Next Generation service project update**

The Fraud and Cyber Crime Reporting and Analysis Service (FCCRAS) programme is continuing to progress.

Remaining bidders are now forming their best and final offer bids for submission in early September. This is after an intensive period during June and July which seen all suppliers engaged in demonstrations and negotiations around their proposed solutions. The project remains on track to recommendation appointing preferred suppliers in November 2022.

### **Outcome 2: Disrupt Fraudsters.**

**NLF Role: We disrupt fraudsters that operate domestically and from overseas in order to make it harder for them to commit crime here in the UK.**

### **Cyber Prevention and Disruption Team**

#### Disruption of a Sophisticated Recovery Room Fraud

Following a call to the force control room by a victim of fraud the Prevention & Disruption (P&D) team saw an opportunity to help disrupt a live fraud recovery room fraud. P&D officers contacted the victim and discovered that victims of an original land investment scheme fraud were being re-targeted by a sophisticated OCG purporting to be appointed by AF to support recovery of their funds. The suspects were cloning legitimate Solicitors firms and private asset recovery firms to encourage victims to part with further money for their services. The reporting victim was undergoing late stage cancer treatment and was highly vulnerable to such a sophisticated crime. Quick time action was taken to disrupt the suspects website, phone number and email address. An analyst was then tasked to research the Action Fraud System resulting in the identification of 29 AF reports and the opportunity to disrupt a further 10 phone numbers, 3 websites and 6 phone numbers used as vehicles for this crime. A further request was made to the complex crime team to review these AF reports for dissemination to force for investigation, with current losses report at over £600,000.

#### **Disruption of Hacking For Mandate Fraud**

P&D proactively identified the victim of a mandate fraud in which a legitimate Solicitors Firm was hacked and a number of their clients targeted with false invoices and payment requests resulting in losses exceeding £80,000 per victim. P&D noted a cloned website and email address created by the suspect to facilitate this and disrupted it, preventing further victims from being targeted. Officers then worked with the service provider to identify further websites and emails registered to clone other firms and removed these as well, preventing future harm. P&D are now working with the protect team to design alerts to businesses who may have been hacked for the purpose of mandate fraud and be unaware of the threat posed to their business and its customers. A further extension of this will be to explore the publication of protect

alerts telling the public why a website has been taken down and encouraging the public to report if they have been a victim of crime.

### **Outcome 3: Investigate and Prosecute.**

**NLF Role: We successfully lead the local to national policing response in investigating and prosecuting fraudsters, ensuring better criminal justice outcomes for victims.**

#### **PIPCU**

Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) and North West PIPCU led a week long intensification campaign to target the UK Counterfeit Hotspot in Cheetham Hill, Manchester under Operation Lucena. This was a multi-agency operation involving the IPO, GMP, Greater Manchester Council, and Immigration officer amongst others. The operation resulted in the arrest of 9 suspects, the seizure of over 28 tonnes of counterfeit goods with an estimated loss to industry of £20million. Over £18,000 cash was also seized. This resulted in extensive local media coverage and provided GMP with the opportunity to positively demonstrate the increased action that they will be taking in the area.

#### **PIPCU**

PIPCU executed a warrant at a warehouse thought to be selling counterfeit car parts. 1 arrest was made with 25 tonnes of goods seized and an estimated loss to industry of £1million. This resulted in the identification of an organised crime group that are also believed to be involved in other criminal activity, including money laundering.

#### **National Lead Force**

**Op Rasalhague** was an investigation into an investment fraud that was run by an Organised Crime Group targeting vulnerable people and repeat victims by using 'sucker lists'. The victim was over 80, he lost £4m to fraudulent investments and the suspect tried to get another £67K from him, supposedly so the OCG could help him recover his money. The case was taken on by National Lead Force, City of London Police from other forces who were unable to provide a service to the victim. City officers visited the victim, prevented him from sending the further funds and provide crime prevention advice.

Intelligence development suggested the suspect was in Spain. The team worked with Spanish authorities to carry out overseas enquiries to locate and arrest him. An expert witness was engaged, he compared the recovered audio with calls recorded between the victim and suspect and with voice samples taken from the arrested person and confirmed them to be the same. This constituted part of the key evidence.

The suspect was remanded in custody and although he initially elected for trial, he later pleaded guilty to fraud. He was sentenced by HHJ Brown at Leicester Crown Court to two years immediate custody. The Judge praised the police investigation team, which comprised DC Howden and Police Staff Investigator Watkins and DS Meghji.

## **DCPCU - Cherokee**

### **Background**

A serial fraudster who impersonated genuine account holders (with counterfeit documents) was referred to the DCPCU to investigate.

### **Investigation**

The investigation revealed that the fraudster was Mr Aadil LATIF. Between 29/01/2022 and 17/05/2022 Mr Latif had entered a number of Nationwide Branches in the North-West area of the UK and falsely purported to be customers and conducted withdrawals on the compromised accounts.

Mr Latif was arrested and charged for fraud.

On the 08<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at Liverpool Crown Court LATIF was sentenced to 14 months imprisonment.

## **DCPCU - Op Jade**

### **Background**

A corrupt staff member was identified as working with an OCG to unblock bank accounts that had security measures imposed on them by the bank. This is an MO the DCPCU are seeing more frequently where staff members are being corrupted to exploit accounts that are under the control of an OCG but have had blocks placed on them due to initial suspicious activity.

### **Investigation**

The suspect was identified as Mohammed Iqbal who worked for the Palmers Green branch of Lloyds Bank.

Along with his co-conspirators Iqbal was responsible for a significant loss to the victims running into many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Iqbal was seen in the branch with a number of co-conspirators and imposters who were variously posing as account holders or simply providing or exchanging information with Mr Iqbal to facilitate the frauds; changing account details and also authorising through, liaison with internal banking departments, fraudulent transfers that the bank had either blocked or highlighted as highly suspicious or potentially fraudulent.

Officers from the DCPCU arrested Iqbal and he was subsequently charged with fraud. On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022 at Snaresbrook Crown Court Iqbal was sentenced to 3 years and 6 months imprisonment.

## **IFED**

### **R v Rajesh Ghedia**

Rajesh Ghedia defrauded multiple insurance and pension companies out of over £1.3 million by feigning that he had stage 4 pancreatic cancer and less than a year to live. Ghedia also exploited his role at a well-known investment bank to convince friends, family and acquaintances to invest in financial products that did not exist. In reality, the victims had transferred nearly £625,000 directly into his personal account. Sentenced to a total of six years and nine months in prison and subject to confiscation proceedings.

#### **Outcome 4: Raise Awareness and Prevent Crime.**

**NLF Role: We raise awareness of the threat and prevent fraud impacting people and businesses.**

City of London Police, as national lead force for fraud, launched a courier fraud campaign in May 2022 to raise awareness of the tactics used by callus fraudsters. A media pack including a press release, regional statistics and social media assets were sent out to forces to participate in the campaign.

Action Fraud launched a national awareness campaign on holiday fraud in May 2022 as new data showed reports had skyrocketed 120% between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.

#### **Outcome 5: Building Capacity and Capability.**

**NLF Role: As National Lead Force we work creatively and with partners to improve capacity and capability committed to fighting fraud, both across policing and the wider system.**

#### **Economic and Cyber Crime Academy**

##### **New Webpage**

The Academy Launched a new web page, complete with a new online booking system, that has incorporated the organisational step towards delivering 'Cyber Training' to UK law enforcement.

- [Home | academy.cityoflondon.police.uk](https://academy.cityoflondon.police.uk)

The new web page reflects the change in organisational direction to include a wider Cyber Training portfolio and has been renamed to become the Economic and Cyber Crime Academy – *The ECCA*.

The ambition is to be able to take on and lead the NPCC Cyber project training courses from October 2022.

To ensure we support Front Line Policing we have introduced several Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events. A 'bite size' 1 hour event where a current Threat, Harm or Risk is raised and discussed in partnerships with working regional partners, UK Finance, and the banking sector.

The first CPD was in relation to City of London Police and CPS agreed fraud best practice in the **Management and Risk Oversight Model for Serious and Complex Fraud**. The presentation reached 218 SIO delegates from across the UK to ensure that current best practise was circulated. It also supported HMICFRS Serious Organised Crime (SOC) inspection areas.

##### Internal training

Two free courses were provided to staff and police officers to improve the City of London Policing response to Cyber Crime and the open source intelligence available online.

- [ECCA launches Open Source Intelligence course \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)
- [Demystifying Cybercrime: Economic Crime Academy offer online course to all in force \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

The Academy has introduced a training development programme for staff and officers to gain skills to deliver training commencing in September 2022

The Academy training team delivered the following courses to the following delegates in the first quarter supporting both National / Regional requirements and the PECT uplift of staff :-

**Bribery and Corruption: 30**  
**Accredited Counter Fraud Specialist Programme: 11**  
**Virtual Currency Course: 53**  
**Internet Investigations Foundation Course: 9**  
**Demystifying Cybercrime: 12**  
**Money Laundering: 53**  
**Accredited Counter Fraud Manager: 13**  
**Specialist Fraud Investigators Programme: 38**  
**Fraud Foundation Investigation Course: 15**  
**Investigative Interviewing: 7**  
**Economic Crime Case Review: 15**  
**Essentials of Fraud Investigation**  
**A bespoke NFIB course : 9**  
**Victim Care – 10**

### **Funding**

The Academy has secured funding to provide courses at 'zero cost' to support our National and Local policing colleagues over the next 2 years. It is hoped that this will enable staff/officers to be in the best position to tackle fraud and money laundering offences.

### **LFOR**

LFOR led the National Courier Fraud campaign in May 2022

This generated considerable interest across the UK Forces and Regions. The campaign was heavily focussed on PROTECT messaging with the BBC, ITV, Radio 4 and a number of National and Local publications supporting the campaign in highlighting the issues to the public. As a direct result of the Safer Gem partnership in City of London, a 93yr old victim was prevented from losing £115,000 when he attended a jewellers who had been briefed on vulnerable victims and courier fraud as part of the campaign.

### **LFOR launched the Courier Fraud and Romance Fraud intensification period in partnership with CRIMESTOPPERS in June 2022.**

This was an initiative funded by the NECC that utilised established networks such as Neighbourhood Watch and Social Media sites to support in LFOR in their role as National Lead for this offence. There has been a great deal of interest in the posts which has enabled LFOR to continue to reach out to all members of the Community in an attempt to reduce the offending and protect the vulnerable victims from being targeted. Latest NFIB figures show that Courier Fraud reporting is 61% lower than the average monthly figures for 2021-2022 and a 12% reduction from the previous month. The CRIMESTOPPERS campaign will shift focus to Romance Fraud in time for Christmas and Valentine's Day.

## Proactive Economic Crime Teams

The number of Proactive Economic Crime Teams (PECT) that are operational continues to increase. Lead Force Operations Room (LFOR) has supported the recent development of South West ROCU, North West ROCU and TARIAN<sup>1</sup> PECTs and continue to manage the tasking and performance process on a National basis. We are in communications with East Midlands and the LFOR dedicated PECT officers working hard to identify and share best practice and any barriers that support the regions in their development of these pro-active teams. Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU<sup>2</sup>) PECT recently obtained the first conviction for a male wanted initially for a breach of a Serious Crime Prevention Order but on further enquiries was committing other fraud related offences. He received a custodial sentence of 8yrs and 9 months.

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<sup>1</sup> [Tarian ROCU – Regional Organised Crime Unit](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Home | ERSOU](#)