

Committee(s): Police: Economic Crime Board	Date(s): 1 st May 2015
Subject: National Lead Force Update	Public
Report of: Commissioner of Police Pol 23/15	For Information
<u>Summary</u>	
<p>Our National Police Coordinators Office continues with an extensive programme of engagement with Police Chief Officer's, Police and Crime Commissioners and the Home Office in order to improve the police response to fraud. As can be seen from the performance report our intervention is having real impact at the local level and this is being acknowledged nationally. Supporting the delivery of key strategic documents (see separate report) we have worked closely with partners to put in place the means of turning the strategies into practice. As well as our significant development work we have continued to support forces nationally on an ongoing basis through our Force Support Team and the National Economic Crime Prevention Centre. We look forward to communicating the progress made by policing and our ambitious forward work plan at a stakeholder event in June.</p>	
<u>Recommendation</u>	
It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.	

MAIN REPORT

1. Background

The National Police Coordinator's Office (NCO) continues on an extensive programme of engagement with Police Chief Officer's, Police and Crime Commissioners and the Home Office in order to improve the police response to fraud. This engagement has brought about measureable improvement in the way in which local forces nationally tackle fraud (see performance report).

2. Current Position

The NCO has delivered a number of initiatives on which to base engagement with stakeholders. We have produced, in conjunction with partners and wide consultation a strategic framework to guide the way policing tackles fraud. The key strategic documents are covered by a separate report. We are determined to bring these strategies to life to shape delivery at the practical level and are using representatives

from local forces across the country within our Economic Crime Portfolio network to do so. Some of our higher level operational initiatives are covered below.

3. National Capability Survey.

As an important element of our engagement we have completed an assessment of the UK's capability and capacity to investigate fraud across the Country. We have written to Chief Constables and PCC's with the key findings and identified best practice and to encourage them to review their forces approach to tackling fraud. In particular we have asked them to nominate a suitable senior officer to lead on this and with whom our Economic Crime Portfolio network can engage to support local improvement. We have asked them to examine in particular their current practices for vulnerable victims. Key findings were:

- The number of specialists employed on fraud was 1,500 the same as in 2010. This masks the fact however that, between the two surveys, numbers had dropped significantly a trend which we have managed to reverse by highlighting the impact locally of reduced capability and encouraging growth. It was to be noted that of the 1,500 over half were based in London by virtue of the MPS Op Falcon and CoLP NLF resources.
- Less than 50% of forces assessed the impact of fraud within their last strategic assessments.
- Fraud is regularly featuring in only 25% of forces' tactical assessments.
- The best performing forces have both a well understood and followed process and, crucially, have nominated officers accountable for the effective tackling of fraud at both the strategic (chief officer) and operational level.

4. Setting National Standards

Following on from acceptance of our Authorised Professional Practice (APP) we have been invited by the National College of Policing to lead on development of the national standards to be adopted by forces. In parallel we have been heavily involved with HMIC in our capacity as the national experts in helping them firstly understand the fraud challenge and our response to it and to then to develop a fraud themed inspection regime for the country from 2016 onwards.

5. Victim Support Unit Pilot

We held an open-day on the 15th April to show-case the work of our London based economic crime victim care unit. As well as delivering a very well received service to London based victims it has encouraged others to explore similar models in their regions and to discuss involvement in and expansion of our pilot. We have also used it as a proof of concept demonstrator with which to inform our development of a draft strategy for police support to victims of fraud (covered in a separate report). In particular we have used it to develop the means by which we can identify vulnerable or potential repeat victims from their initial reports to Action Fraud.

6. Ongoing Support to Forces

As well as driving improvement through developments and initiatives such as those outlined above and in our report on strategic papers we continue to deliver a service on an ongoing basis through our Force Support Team (FST) and through the National Economic Crime Prevention Centre (NECPC).

7. Force Support Team (FST)

The FST has been effective in working with forces at a very practical level to improve their systems and processes and to fire-fight problems. Such visits normally follow my own personal engagement with the relevant Chief Officers and often use our attrition performance data to identify areas for support. Whilst having only a small core team the FST is able to pull in the most appropriate expertise from across CoLP (or further afield when appropriate) to provide an advisory team tailored to the needs of the individual force. Recent interactions have involved subject matter experts from the investigation teams, NFIB, and those with particular expertise in crime categorisation and management.

8. National Economic Crime Prevention Centre (NECPC)

The NECPC sits at the centre of an extensive Fraud Prevention Network (FPN) comprising at its heart named members of each local force to act as the channel through which national prevention campaigns are taken to their local community and through which local requirements for national support are fed back. I reported previously on the successful 12 Frauds of Christmas campaign and now attach an outline of the forthcoming campaign to prevent fraud committed against those making their Hajj pilgrimages (Appendix 1).

9. Stakeholder Engagement

We have produced an ambitious forward work-plan to build on the considerable advances we have made in the past year. We are conscious of the need for support from our stakeholders if we are to achieve all we want and will be working with the Corporation to ensure we are engaged at the appropriate political and corporate levels. We intend to remind others of our achievements and signpost our way ahead through an event to formally launch the various strategies and policies we have delivered on behalf of national policing (see Strategic Papers report).

10. Conclusion

This has been a significant period nationally for CoLP and the NCO. We have led the development of significant national policies and strategies and continue to work with police and other stakeholders to bring these into practice to the benefit of our communities.

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BACKGROUND BRIEF – THE HAJJ CAMPAIGN

Two-and-half years ago (October 2013) the City of London Police, which is the National Policing Lead for Fraud, launched a multi-media campaign in partnership with the Council of British Hajjis to combat Hajj fraud. The principal aim was to raise awareness of a criminality that for years had been going unreported and undetected within Muslim communities across the UK that was both damaging and ruining pilgrim's trips to Mecca and costing victims thousands of pounds. The campaign included operational activity, was reported on across national, regional and Muslim focused media and led to a small increase in crime reporting to Action Fraud.

In 2014 the campaign was moved forwards to June and focused on police force areas with large Muslim populations and increased community engagement. This time it was supported by National Trading Standards with the aim of reaching Muslims before they booked their trips with advice to help them spot when they were at risk of a fraud and encouraging them to book their trips in the safest way possible. Operational activity was broadcast on the BBC 'One Show' and there was again a small increase in reporting to Action Fraud. Most positively of all National Trading Standards committed £100,000 to combat the problem nationwide, sharing information with the City of London Police's National Fraud Intelligence Bureau and taking proactive steps to both warn and shut down tour operators suspected to be operating illegally.

Both these campaigns have delivered an increased awareness of Hajj fraud, with a small group of agencies and community groups working together to combat a criminality that continues to bring heartache and misery to members of the Muslim community. However, we are now at the point where if we are to build on these successes a much wider, more collaborative partnership cutting across law enforcement, the Government, academia, travel operators and regulators and the Muslim community is needed. People and organisations are working positively and productively in small partnerships or in isolation but still the offending continues with the vast majority of victims still choosing to suffer in silence rather than seek support and report the crime.

The Hajj fraud event will bring these disparate groups together and make the case for a more targeted, cohesive approach to combatting Hajj (and also Umrah) fraud. It will be an opportunity to look back at what has already been achieved and to lay out what needs to be done to really get to grips with this problem now and in the future. This will include presentations and discussions on:

- Laying out the nature and scale of the problem and identify why so many people choose to suffer in silence rather than seek help and advice and report a crime. In essence explaining why there is reason to hold the Hajj event.
- Emphasise the priority that must be given to crime prevention activities, running alongside operational activity where the evidence and intelligence demands it.
- Present the academic research and conclusions that are now available around the issue of Hajj and Umrah fraud.

- Highlight the collective will there is across the UK to address this problem, the mechanisms that are already in place to tackle the current threat and show how this can and must be brought together and improved to deliver a more effective response to Hajj and Umrah fraud.
- The most effective way to reach into the Muslim community with key crime prevention advice and to encourage them to report to Action Fraud or Trading Standards when they have fallen victim to some sort of scam.