

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Fraud Awareness (Personal)

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Fraud Awareness (Personal)
Link Officer/s:	Jimmy Jones
Action Plan Agreed:	July 2021

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 1:	Representation is made to Action Fraud encouraging the sharing of relevant fraud information with the Local Authority (reflective of this review and in support of the National Trading Standards position).
Responsibility:	SBC (Jimmy Jones – Trading Standards)
Date:	1) September 2021 2) October 2021 3) November 2021
Agreed Action:	1) Prepare background information and first draft of letter to Action Fraud. 2) Seek Lead Member approval from Cllr Steve Nelson - Cabinet Member for Access, Communities & Community Safety. 3) Final draft of letter to be approved by Lead Member and sent to Action Fraud.
Agreed Success Measure:	1) Complete preparation and first draft of letter. 2) Obtain Lead Member approval. 3) Approved letter signed by Lead Member and sent to Action Fraud.
Evidence of Progress (July 2022):	A first draft of the letter was prepared towards the end of September 2021. This draft was discussed with Cllr Steve Nelson, the then Cabinet member for Access, Communities and Community Safety, in October 2021 and the final agreed version was sent out to Action Fraud on 22 October 2021.
Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (July 2022):	The views of the Committee as laid out in the letter from the Lead Cabinet Member, have been expressed to Action Fraud. However, the situation remains that Trading Standards does not receive any referrals from Action Fraud and does not have direct remote access to the Action Fraud database and this situation seems unlikely to change in the short to medium term.

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Recommendation 2:	Cleveland Police consider the existing resources it has in place to tackle fraud, with a view to facilitating the disruption and prevention of fraud being committed in the first place, in addition to the investigation and prosecution of such crime.
Responsibility:	Cleveland Police (Detective Inspector Jim Forster – Economic Crime Unit)
Date:	1) March 2022 2) Ongoing
Agreed Action:	The force has finite resources and has no plans at present to increase dedicated fraud investigation officers. In the last year however, it has trained additional officer posted on other teams in fraud and has recently trained a number of civilian investigators in fraud investigation. This will greatly increase the capacity to deal with fraud investigations. As part of our Raising Investigatory Standards programme, we have produced advice for officers on fraud investigation and hold drop-in sessions where officers can seek advice from an experienced fraud investigator in order to improve the standards of fraud investigation across the force.
Agreed Success Measure:	1) Increase in the number of fraud investigations with a positive outcome and a reduction in fraud victims, especially repeat victims. 2) Enhanced support for the public who are victims of fraud.
Evidence of Progress (July 2022):	The number of dedicated fraud investigators remains the same. The Force has not been able to increase this number, but this will be looked at again when resources allow. A new Economic Threat Desk has been set up at NERSOU which reviews and assesses the risk from Economic Crime across the three north east regions. This includes dedicated PROTECT officers who scan and respond to threats across the north east. Fraud and Cyber officers have been given dedicated cryptocurrency investigation training and provided with IT systems to carry out crypto investigations.
Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2022):	A recent review of the Force by the City of London Police has highlighted a number of areas where the Force could develop further to improve detection rates. These will be looked at by the Head of Crime to assess if they are feasible. Victims continue to be supported and offenders brought to justice for fraud offences. Complex investigations are dealt with by the small fraud team and other investigations are dealt with across the Force. All crime reports allocated by the City of London are investigated by the Force and these have continued to increase:-

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	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL	1748	2032	2337	2498

VCAS provide support for fraud victims and the Economic Crime Unit visit vulnerable victims identified to them.

Recommendation 3:	Cleveland Police maximise the Neighbourhood Policing model to aid in identifying and supporting vulnerable residents, providing regular updates on the latest fraud-related activity and how residents can protect themselves (e.g. utilising the new Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland monthly e-newsletter).
Responsibility:	Cleveland Police (Detective Inspector Jim Forster – Economic Crime Unit)
Date:	1) Ongoing 2) March 2022
Agreed Action:	Each month the Neighbourhood police teams receive details of all vulnerable and repeat fraud victims on their area in order to support them and hopefully prevent future victims. VCAS work together with ourselves and support the victims. We have a dedicated Protect officer based within the Cyber Unit who has now commenced a regular webinar for businesses, schools and community groups giving advice on fraud, cybercrime and online safety. This remit will hopefully grow as time progresses.
Agreed Success Measure:	1) Enhanced support for victims of crime. 2) Better sharing of fraud prevention advice to a wider audience enabling people to take steps to identify a scam and protect themselves.
Evidence of Progress (July 2022):	VCAS have been awarded a further 4 year contract to provide support for victims of crime. They continue to provide enhanced support for vulnerable victims of fraud and cybercrime. The PROTECT officer has established links with the local community for distribution of PROTECT advice as threats are identified using a number of channels including social media. Through the SOCLP forum, the Police have asked for dedicated SPOCs within each local authority who can assist in providing a pathway to specific victim groups to help get messages out quickly when necessary. This is due to be reported back at the next SOCLP meeting.
Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2022):	A recent inspection by the City of London Police has acknowledged that Cleveland Police are good at supporting victims and safeguarding the most vulnerable victims of fraud. Key findings from the review were:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force reviews the weekly victim data from NFIB and have clearly defined process to assess and respond to vulnerability. • High vulnerability victims are recorded on local crime systems. • The Force has a good working relationship with VCAS and coordinate the delivery of safeguarding to victims. • The Force collaborates with partner agencies to deliver fraud protect messaging to the public. <p>Cleveland Police continue to safeguard victims utilising the victim data provided on a weekly basis from Action Fraud. We have had significant successes in assisting individuals in recovering stolen funds or preventing the loss of funds.</p> <p>Cleveland Police ensure that banking protocol incidents are responded to ensure vulnerable victims are prevented from sending funds to fraudsters.</p>
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Recommendation 4:	All local partners continue sharing and disseminating key anti-fraud messages, emerging threats, reporting mechanisms and existing fraud-related resources via all available platforms (not just online).
Responsibility:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) SBC (Jimmy Jones – Trading Standards) 2) SBC (Craig Willows – Community Services)
Date:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) March 2022 2) September 2021
Agreed Action:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All local partners are committed to sharing and disseminating key antifraud messages and information via existing established networks. 2) Engage with key partners on the Safer Stockton Partnership to encourage a more joined up approach.
Agreed Success Measure:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Better sharing of fraud prevention advice to a wider audience enabling people to take steps to identify a scam and protect themselves. 2) Increased awareness of key messages on fraud and scams prevention amongst relevant local agencies.
Evidence of Progress (July 2022):	<p>All local partners remain committed to sharing and disseminating key anti-fraud messages. In the last year, Trading Standards have sent 48 notifications to the SBC Media Team, on current and trending scams, with key graphics and sources of help. Scams highlighted include many related to COVID-19, lockdowns, dating, investments, pet sales, bogus job adverts, OneCall, lotteries, gift cards etc.</p> <p>Press releases continue to be issued, especially in connection with ongoing court cases, see:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/rogue-builder-took-25k-payments-22011228 • https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/rogue-car-dealer-who-flogged-21668408

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	<p>Links have been established with the Stockton Infinity Partnership which deals with issues around financial inclusion. The group is made up of service providers from the public, voluntary, community and private sectors, including Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. Scams has been identified as an area of concern and vulnerability, especially given the current high cost of living.</p> <p>In June 2022, Trading Standards attended a Scams Awareness Stall on Stockton's Wednesday market, with SDAIS and Virgin Money to make direct face to face contact with consumers to discuss fraud prevention and provide scam awareness material.</p> <p>Links with the Safer Stockton Partnership have been made, and in June 2022 the Trading Standards Manager briefed members on issues around fraud awareness and scams prevention.</p> <p>Information on the scams section of the Trading Standards web pages has recently been reviewed as part of the Council's website update.</p>
<p>Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>1 (Fully Achieved)</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact (July 2022):</p>	<p>Ongoing efforts to spread the fraud prevention and scams awareness message continue across a range of forums, though evidence of impact can be difficult to measure.</p> <p>Some messages are known to have struck a chord and been circulated widely. The Media Team informed us that one particular Social Media post on a Banking Scam reached over 10,000 people and was shared widely: see https://www.facebook.com/stocktoncouncil/photos/a.119665881382598/5584600644889067/</p>

<p>Recommendation 5:</p>	<p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council includes a regular fraud-related feature in Stockton News which details the latest scams, reinforces reporting routes, and, where possible, highlights the prevalence of fraud against particular age-groups, including those under 40 years-old.</p>
<p>Responsibility:</p>	<p>SBC (Jimmy Jones – Trading Standards)</p>
<p>Date:</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Agreed Action:</p>	<p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to publicising important Trading Standards messages in Stockton News, including key messages on scams awareness and wider fraud protection issues for all age groups, including those under 40 years of age.</p>
<p>Agreed Success Measure:</p>	<p>Better sharing of fraud prevention advice to a wider audience enabling people to take steps to identify a scam and protect themselves.</p>
<p>Evidence of Progress (July 2022):</p>	<p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council remains committed to publicising key messages on scams awareness and wider fraud protection issues, in its community magazine, Stockton News. Recent articles include one on 'number spoofing' where fraudsters deliberately change their telephone caller ID to disguise who they are or even pose as a legitimate organisation, such as a</p>

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	bank, a credit card company, the HMRC or even the Police. Another article warned against the use of doorstep cold callers to carry out home maintenance and repairs.
Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2022):	Current and topical issues are highlighted in order to increase impact. For example, the article concerning rogue traders carrying out home maintenance and repair work was included in the Spring 2022 edition of Stockton News, as this is the time of year when the weather is starting to improve, and many residents begin to consider repairs and improvements in and around their home and garden. An article on Christmas scams is planned for the next Winter edition.

Recommendation 6:	Relevant data and key messages for young people around fraud crime be shared with the Council’s Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) initiative to facilitate strengthened awareness-raising with that specific demographic.
Responsibility:	SBC (Jimmy Jones – Trading Standards)
Date:	March 2022
Agreed Action:	Contact Jane Webb (Community Engagement Manager) to facilitate effective engagement with the Council’s BMBF initiative to promote fraud awareness messages amongst young people.
Agreed Success Measure:	Active engagement with the BMBF initiative around scams awareness and fraud prevention advice for young people to help them identify a scam and take steps to protect themselves.
Evidence of Progress (July 2022):	<p>Contact has been made with the BMBF initiative in order to facilitate and develop mechanisms in which to share key messages around scams awareness and fraud prevention.</p> <p>As a result, in the last year, 16 key scams awareness messages have been distributed to BMBF via these channels. These messages were selected for the specific demographic and social media medium. Scams highlighted included issues around e-scooters, money mules, festival tickets and remote access to devices.</p> <p>Further dialogue has been carried out to engage with BMBF on scams generally and to answer scams related issues.</p>
Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (July 2022):	Current and topical issues relevant to the younger demographic are shared in order to increase impact.

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Recommendation 7:	The feasibility of supporting Age UK Teesside to extend its provision of digital projects (enabling older people to learn about devices / how to use the internet) in Middlesbrough / Redcar and Cleveland to Stockton-on-Tees is further explored.
Responsibility:	SBC (Jimmy Jones – Trading Standards)
Date:	September 2021
Agreed Action:	Obtain from Age UK Teesside an outline of objectives, specification and costs in relation to a proposed Digital Inclusion Project in Stockton-on-Tees.
Agreed Success Measure:	Receipt of relevant information from Age UK Teesside.
Evidence of Progress (July 2022):	Contact was made with Age UK Teesside and an outline of objectives, specification and costs was obtained in relation to their Digital Inclusion Project by September 2021.
Assessment of Progress (July 2022): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (July 2022):	This project was not taken forward due to a lack of available funding.

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
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