



Welcome to Issue 11 of our Covid-19 Fraud Alert newsletter.

Please feel free to contact your Local Counter Fraud Specialist for advice on any type of fraud, you will find our details on the last page.

Covid-19 Scams Targeting Public

As the Covid-19 Vaccination programme continues to unfold, there have been a number of different scams emerging. The scams listed below are a few that have come to our attention, but fraudsters are always changing their tactics.

“Genetics” Email



An email has been received by members of the public. It is distinctive in appearance as it often has bright yellow surrounding the text. The email states that the government has re-prioritised based on “genetics” and the recipient is now immediately eligible for the vaccine. The email asks the recipient to click on a link in order to book their appointment, and states that they have only 12 hours to do so.

“Insurance” Phone Call



A member of the public has reported that they received a call from someone who said they were calling from the NHS. The caller said that many insurance providers were refusing to pay out for Covid-19 related deaths. The caller asked for the person’s life insurance information which they said was needed to “update an NHS database”. The member of the public declined and ended the call. There have been no problems being reported with insurance companies refusing to honour existing policies following death as a result of Covid-19.

“NHS Number Used—Press 1” Phone Call



A member of the public reported receiving a phone call which, when answered, played an automated message saying “Your NHS Number has been used fraudulently, Press 1 to find out more”. When he pressed 1, he was connected to a person who said they needed to confirm his name and address. When he queried who he was speaking to, he was told he was through to the “NHS Fraud Investigation Department”. When he asked where in the UK they were calling from they said “the North East”. There is no such thing as the “NHS Fraud Investigation Department”. Although the NHS Counter Fraud Authority have offices in the North East, they have confirmed this call was nothing to do with them.

If you have friends or family who mention receiving these types of calls or messages, please direct them to report the matter to Action Fraud. Please remember that the NHS will not:

- x Charge for the vaccine
- x Ask for financial information
- x Ask for copies of your passport, driving licence or utility bills
- x Ask for your PIN or banking password

Prison Sentence for NHS £5.7m Fraudster

A woman who attempted to con £5.7 million from the NHS has been sentenced to 6 months in prison. Linda Metcalf had claimed that medical negligence had resulted in her being unable to dress herself, unable to drive, and that she could barely walk or stand. She claimed that as a result of a 24 hour delay in diagnosis, she had been left housebound and that she needed a live in carer and specially adapted home.

Linda had told specialists that she needed two sticks to be able to walk 30 metres, had to hire a mobility scooter to be able to go to the supermarket, and could not stand for over 1 minute without assistance. She had made a claim for compensation totalling £5.7 million.

An investigation demonstrated that not only had Linda been on several UK holidays, she had also been to New Zealand, Fiji, Hong Kong, Tenerife, Thailand and Lanzarote during the same period she was telling specialists how poor her quality of life had become.

CCTV footage showed her driving, walking up steps, walking without sticks, and queuing for half an hour in a hotel reception unaided. Once confronted with the footage, she admitted she had lied about her condition. Metcalf had already accepted and spent a payment of £75,000 which was the first instalment of her compensation payments. Metcalf has now paid this back and has been sentenced to 6 months in prison for fraud.

In a similar case, a patient claimed he needed £650,000 in compensation after a delay in diagnosis of a hand injury he had incurred whilst punching a wall. He said the delay had left him unable to hold a pan whilst cooking. He was later spotted quad biking with friends and taking part in a Go Ape adventure course. The NHS has now started Contempt of Court proceedings and he may end up in prison.



Salary Diversion and ESR Fraud

You may remember this topic from earlier editions of the newsletter. Unfortunately, in January we were made aware of two cases where NHS staff who had not received their salary on payday.

Fraudsters are always looking for ways into NHS systems. They may impersonate Payroll employees, ESR or other members of staff.

Salary diversion occurs when people email Payroll or HR teams pretending to be a member of staff and asking for their pay details to be updated.

ESR fraudsters will ask you to log into ESR via a dodgy link. Entering your user name and password into their dummy site provides them with the information they need to change your bank details and steal your personal data for use in other frauds.



Please take a moment to revisit the key advice below:

- Changes to bank details should be done by employees themselves, using ESR Self Service
- If you receive an email which appears to be from Payroll or ESR, treat it with caution
- Do not click on links within emails that claim they will take you to ESR. Open a web browser and type the address in manually.
- If you get an email telling you your bank details have been updated on ESR and you did not make this request, phone Payroll as soon as possible. You may also need to reset your ESR password.
- Use a unique and strong password for ESR - it holds a lot of sensitive information the fraudsters would find very valuable.
- If you are in doubt about an email which appears to be from Payroll or ESR, you can contact the Local Counter Fraud Specialists for advice.

Did you know? Working Whilst Sick

The Local Counter Fraud Specialist team often encounter allegations of “Working Whilst Sick” - in fact, it’s the most common referral we receive.

Working Whilst Sick (also known as WWS for short) happens when a person is signed off from their NHS role but then works somewhere else during their sick leave.

There is nothing wrong with having more than one role, many people do. We ask that you follow the points below if you do have another role or are considering one.

- You need to make sure that you declare any secondary employment to your line manager before you take on any new roles.
- You may also need to fill out a declaration of interest if your secondary role potentially produces a conflict of interest with your NHS role (refer to your organisation’s Conflicts of Interest or Standards of Business Conduct Policy for more information).
- If you are signed off sick from your NHS role, you need to make sure that you tell your GP about any other work you are doing. They can then advise whether or not it is safe for you to attend your second place of work, and can capture this on your fit note.
- If you do work elsewhere whilst receiving sick pay from the Trust, please inform your manager.
- If in doubt about whether you need to declare something, consult with your line manager and/or HR representative.



If you declare yourself to be sick, or are signed off work by your GP, but undertake any similar roles elsewhere, this may be investigated as a fraud matter. WWS referrals are looked at on a case by case basis.

The Occupational Health and Human Resources departments are also on hand to provide information and support to managers and staff to assist with sickness absence and to provide rehabilitation advice and support.

If you manage people and would like further information or to attend a fraud awareness workshop, please contact your LCFS.

Counter Fraud Training

Training Sessions

A central part of your Local Counter Fraud Specialist's role is to raise awareness of fraud within the NHS. This can take many forms but the most successful and popular method for us to do this is via face-to-face training with staff. Thanks to the range of conference calling software now at most people's fingertips, we're able to offer online fraud training.

Our Fraud Awareness training focuses on:

- How different types of fraud affect the NHS
- Practical advice on what to look out for and methods to protect yourself and your organisation from fraud
- Real life case studies showing how the NHS is targeted
- Information on how to report concerns about fraud



This training can be arranged to suit you and will be delivered via Microsoft Teams. It is part of our normal service and can be delivered to groups of any size. We are also able to design and deliver bespoke training packages based on any fraud related areas of concern that you feel are most relevant for your team.

We are currently running sessions on Mandate Fraud and Phishing via Microsoft Teams. If you are interested in accessing this training, or to discuss any other fraud training requirements, please contact the LCFS team using the details below.

We are also offering out refresher training for any staff who are responsible for carrying out pre-employment checks for new starters. The pandemic has changed how and when identity documents and qualification certificates are presented. The refresher training provides advice on what to look out for. To register your interest in a session, contact one of the LCFS team using the details below.

How to Contact your Local Counter Fraud Specialist

If you would like more information or advice about fraud and the latest scams, or to raise a concern please feel free to contact your Local Counter Fraud Specialist. You can find our contact details below:

Steve Moss, Head of Anti-Crime Services

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