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Flawed statistics hamper fight on fraud, says Fraud Advisory Panel

Independent fraud watchdog, the Fraud Advisory Panel, calls for a review of official statistics to improve fraud-fighting efforts.

Coinciding with the publication of its annual review, the Fraud Advisory Panel wants the government to review the method used to collect official fraud statistics, and warns that the new pension reforms could provide another avenue for unscrupulous fraudsters to target the elderly.

David Kirk, Fraud Advisory Panel Chairman, said:

“Incomplete statistics leave fraud victims disadvantaged and hide the true level of economic crime in this country. Without a sound understanding of the amount of fraud, and who it is hurting, adequate police resources cannot be applied to tackling the problem.

“The system for collecting fraud statistics remains fundamentally flawed, and unless the true value is revealed the Home Office is unlikely to step up its efforts in this area.

“The Panel believes that a change in methodology would very likely show that crime in the UK is in fact rising, not falling. This is because Home Office statistics currently exclude the very large number of reports from industry (specifically credit and debit card fraud).

“The Office for National Statistics is already upping its game in this area¹, and we urge the Home Office to do the same.

“The UK sorely needs a national task force focussed on ‘scams’, that can give new focus and vigour to the fight against fraudsters who target the vulnerable, and the new pension reforms mean such a force is now needed more than ever before. Only a well-informed, well-resourced and well-executed national approach will work in the fight on fraud.”

Further information can be found at www.fraudadvisorypanel.org

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PRESS RELEASE



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Notes for editors:

1. The government uses two methods to estimate the total number of fraud offences: (1) crimes recorded by the police and submitted to the Home Office, and (2) crime survey for England and Wales (CSEW), now managed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The ONS has recently undertaken a comprehensive review of its survey questions in an attempt to capture a much greater range of offences, including cybercrime.
2. The **Fraud Advisory Panel** is the respected, influential and independent voice of the fraud-fighting community. It seeks to make a tangible, practical difference in the fight against fraud and financial crime by championing anti-fraud best practice and helping people and organisations to increase their fraud resilience and risk awareness.
3. Members are drawn from all sectors – public, private and voluntary – and many different professions who are united by a common concern about fraud and a shared determination to do something about it.
4. The Panel is a registered charity. It was established in 1998 by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) which continues to provide valuable support.