

The Fraud Advisory Panel response to the Fraud Strategy.

The Fraud Advisory Panel recognises that the government has taken the time and effort to formulate both an [economic crime plan](#), from 2023-2026, and a [new Fraud Strategy](#). This is welcomed as a first stage along a lengthy road of Work in Progress.

For too long fraud has been an afterthought in government plans, with resources to challenge and prevent this crime being continually depleted.

What has been suggested in both the economic crime plans and the fraud strategy is insufficient to tackle the international scourge that fraud has become.

Fraud is the most commonly experienced crime in the UK. As reported in the House of Commons Committee of public accounts report, fraud now accounts for 41% of all crime against individuals in England and Wales, while only around 1% of police personnel are dedicated to fraud. Meanwhile, in the National Crime Agency (NCA) report, the 2017 Annual Fraud Indicator, it is estimated that annual fraud in the UK accounted for losses of c. £190 billion.

As such significantly more investment than what has been proposed is required to investigate economic crimes and fraud, to enforce action against bad actors, both corporate and individual and to prevent frauds from occurring in the first instance.

The proposed increase of 400 investigative staff will make a decent start, but what proportion of the currently 3.7 million individual victims and unspecified number of business victims will be affected by the increase remains an open question, as does the types of fraud being targeted and prioritised: the target of 10% fraud reduction by the end of this Parliament is undifferentiated by harm or type of fraud.

The third pillar “Empower the public” falls short of what is needed as it focuses primarily on empowering victims after the event with education of rights, means of redress than having sufficient focus on upskilling the population on how to identify risks and protect oneself. Given the huge number of individual and business victims, it also remains unclear how the NECVU and third sector can realistically tailor their help, as stated in the strategy.

The further empowerment of public sector staff should also be considered. Layers of policy as well as ratio imbalance between supervisory and proactive roles seem to be an endemic problem at least in the civil sector. Fraudsters are swift and bold as such responses must be agile in order to match the threat.

It will be interesting to see if more civil Serious Crime Prevention Orders are sought in the High Court independent of conviction. The main thrust of the strategy is fraud reduction and harm mitigation and to the extent that this happens, it should be welcomed.