

# fraudmatters

## International Fraud Awareness Week

15 - 19 November 2021

**New Fraud Awareness  
eLearning programme  
launched.**

## Emerging trends

Threefold increase in reports of staff working elsewhere while in receipt of HSC sick pay.

## Recent cases

Co Armagh nurse jailed for payroll fraud  
NHS manager jailed in £800k fraud  
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## Dear Colleagues

I am pleased to welcome you to this edition of Fraud Matters, which we have issued as part of our engagement in International Fraud Awareness Week (IFAW) 2021.

HSC has experienced unprecedented pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately at times of crisis there are people who will take every opportunity to exploit the situation and attempt fraudulent activity. It is therefore imperative that all HSC staff are vigilant and report any suspicious activity.

In recent months there has been a significant increase in the number of cases directly involving staff, particularly staff who are working elsewhere while on sick leave. We have also been handling a significant increase in advice and guidance queries.

Now more than ever you need to be alert to the risk of fraud and take the required action.

I hope you will find this newsletter both useful and informative.

**Donna Scott**

Assistant Director, Counter Fraud Services

## International Fraud Awareness Week

Counter Fraud Services support to the global campaign to raise awareness of fraud.



International Fraud Awareness Week (IFAW) is a global initiative organised by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) and supported by hundreds of organisations around the world to help raise awareness of fraud and highlight the importance of fraud prevention.

Fraud is a serious issue, especially when public funds are at risk. When Health and Social Care (HSC) becomes a victim of fraud, this means a loss of resources intended to support and deliver patient care.

This year's awareness campaign is more important than ever, with health and social care budgets continuing to feel the strain of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research undertaken by the ACFE shows 51% of organisations have uncovered more fraud since the onset of the pandemic, while 71% expect the level of fraud to increase next year.

These figures alone highlight the importance of developing robust preventative measures to tackle fraud in order to safeguard HSC resources.

CFS continues to engage with colleagues across the HSC, the wider counter fraud community and law enforcement agencies, however we need your continued support to share the counter fraud message within your workplace.

## New eLearning programme launched

CFS have launched a new Fraud Awareness eLearning course to coincide with International Fraud Awareness Week.

The new course aims to increase staff understanding of fraud within the context of Health and Social Care, using real case examples and highlighting the detrimental impact fraud can have on HSC resources.

Staff can avail of the new course immediately or as a refresher when their current course accreditation expires.

The course can be accessed through the regional eLearning platform at <https://www.hsclearning.com/>



## Emerging Trends

Allegations of staff undertaking other employment while in receipt of sick pay have increased significantly in 2021.



### What is Working While Sick?

This type of fraud happens when a member of staff claims occupational sick pay from their HSC organisation while working in the same or similar role for another employer.

### Example

An HSC employee phones his/her manager to report unwell and unfit for duty. The employee then undertakes work during the period of absence with another employer.

In these circumstances an employee's absence is recorded to ensure the employee receives sick pay and in many instances cover has to be arranged at additional expense to the organisation.

The employee in these circumstances receives two payments - sick pay from the HSC and payment for the alternative work undertaken.

The employee has made a false representation to the employer regarding fitness for work and could potentially face criminal charges in respect of fraudulent activity. Disciplinary action and referral to a regulatory body may also be appropriate.

### How to prevent it.

- ⊕ Staff should be required to declare any secondary employment to the HSC organisation for which they work.
- ⊕ Managers should ensure that relevant policies and procedures are regularly communicated to all staff and ensure that all staff are fully aware of the HSC zero tolerance approach to fraud.
- ⊕ Managers should ensure compliance with the absence management policy.
- ⊕ Regular contact with staff should be maintained while on sick leave and referral to Occupational Health should be considered, where appropriate.

CFS have produced a series of factsheets focusing on payroll fraud. Available on our website, each factsheet provides a case example of the type of fraud covered and advice on how to prevent it in your workplace.



## Recent cases

Recent cases show fraud is a risk that must be managed across all levels within an organisation.



### **Nurse jailed for £10,000 payroll fraud**

A senior nurse who defrauded more than £10,000 from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust has been sentenced to 14 months imprisonment. The nurse was also sentenced to a further 9 months imprisonment for the separate offence of obtaining employment in a private nursing home using forged references.

The subject entered guilty pleas to a total of twelve offences – eight of fraud by false representation and four of false accounting. The offences related to when the subject was a senior band seven nurse at Craigavon Area Hospital and then as nursing manager at a nursing home in Lisburn.

An investigation undertaken by CFS established she was using her position as a senior nurse to facilitate fraud by claiming for duplicate shifts and for hours not worked.

### **Care worker caught working for another employer while off sick**

A health care assistant in a Northern Ireland Trust who was found to be working for another private care provider while in receipt of sick pay from her HSC employer received a formal caution from the Police which is conditional on the repayment of the monies obtained.

### **GP Practice manager who stole £184,000 of NHS money is jailed**

A trusted medical practice manager who stole £184,000 from the surgery where she worked was jailed for 12 months after being found guilty of fraud by false representation and six counts of fraud by abuse of position.

An investigation established the subject gave herself unauthorised salary rises of several thousands and covertly paid herself overtime. She also falsified invoices and cheques which the surgery's partners signed, thinking they were legitimate, before rubbing out the false payee names and replacing with her own.

### **IT Manager pleads guilty to £800,000 NHS fraud**

A former IT manager who stole more than £800k from a hospital trust where he worked was jailed for 5 years and 4 months.

The subject, who was authorised to approve invoices of up to £7,500, sent hundreds of phony invoices to the hospital, which he would sign off himself.

A counter fraud investigation established he had submitted a 'nil return' declaration of interests form to his employer, while he was actually the director of two companies that had received a large amounts of money from the NHS over at least seven years, despite neither company providing any legitimate products or services to the trust.

# **EVERY POUND LOST TO FRAUD IS ONE LESS POUND TO SPEND ON PATIENT CARE.**

**DON'T IGNORE IT. REPORT IT.**

**If you suspect fraud against Health and Social Care  
call the HSC Fraud Reporting Line or report online.**

**0800 096 33 96  
cfs.hscni.net**

Fraud against Health and Social Care means that money intended for patient care ends up in the pockets of criminals. It means that fewer resources are available to be spent on frontline health and social care services. By reporting fraud, you can help protect HSC resources and bring those responsible to justice.

If you have a concern or suspect that fraud is taking place you should report the matter to your line manager or to your organisation's Fraud Liaison Officer (FLO). Further advice and guidance on how to raise a concern is available in your organisation's Fraud Response Plan and Whistleblowing Policy, usually available on your local staff intranet site.

Alternatively you can report your suspicions to BSO Counter Fraud Services by calling the confidential HSC Fraud Reporting Line on 0800 096 33 96 or by sending a report online at [cfs.hscni.net](http://cfs.hscni.net).

**Together we can stamp out HSC fraud.**