



Statement by Suella Braverman MP Home Secretary 3rd May 2023.

Statement On Fraud

Fraud is the most common crime in England and Wales, accounting for more than 40 per cent of all crime. **It is a despicable crime which causes deep distress and harm to victims.** One in fifteen adults were affected last year - and Action Fraud estimates that more than £4 billion has been lost to scammers across the UK since March.

It's also clear that fraud intersects with other areas of national security, including serious and organised crime, and terrorism. 


It is time for a step-change in our response to fraud. Today, the government is publishing a Strategy that sets out our plans to tackle fraudsters head on and cut fraud by 10% by the end of 2024, protecting the British people's hard-earned cash from criminals and putting more fraudsters behind bars 

The Government has already made a £400 million investment, starting last year, to the police and other agencies to combat economic crime. This includes £100 million for fraud.

Both the UK government and the devolved administrations are committed to combatting fraud. We will continue to ensure that collective issues are addressed collaboratively, and we will build upon the close operational cooperation of policing and the NCA across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

The strategy to tackle fraud has three elements. **First, government and law enforcement will pursue more fraudsters and bring them to justice.** **Second, government and industry will work together to stop fraud attempts.** **And third, the British people will be more empowered to recognise, avoid, and report fraud when they encounter it, and better supported when they do fall victim to it.**

The Strategy contains over 50 ambitious actions. Key actions include:

- Measures to stop criminals abusing the telephone network, including a ban on SIM farms, exploring regulation of mass texting service and restrictions on number 'spoofing'.
- A ban on cold calls on financial products.
- Protecting more people online by driving industry action, including through the world leading Online Safety Bill, commitments from tech firms to make it easier to report scams, and publishing information on the levels of fraud on different platforms.
- Establishment of a National Fraud Squad with 400 new investigators.
- Replacement of Action Fraud, to make it easier for victims to report fraud and for law enforcement to use and share data.
- **The appointment of Anthony Browne MP as Anti-Fraud Champion.**
- **A new UKIC cell to drive intelligence-led lead disruptions.**
- **Ensuring more people get their money back by changing the law to require banks and financial institutions to pay back victims of fraud.** 

Stopping criminals from abusing the telecommunications networks

The Government will not tolerate the barrage of scam texts and bogus phone calls that are causing misery to so many.

Many fraudsters ‘spoof’ or change their number to impersonate legitimate businesses, like our banks, and hide their identity. Regulators will clamp down on these criminals ‘spoofing’ UK numbers, making it harder for them to deceive victims.

Many scam text campaigns can be traced to SIM farms, devices that can send thousands of scam texts in seconds. While most frequently used for fraudulent texts, we know that they are widely used by criminal gangs. Today, the Government has published a consultation on banning SIM farms and is also asking what other technologies or devices should be made illegal.

There will also be a review of mass texting services. While there are many legitimate uses of these services – like restaurant bookings, appointment reminders and delivery updates – there is some evidence to suggest that these services are being abused by criminals.

A ban on cold calling on investment products

Government will consult on how best to ban cold calls on financial products so that fraudsters cannot dupe people into buying fake investments or other illegitimate financial products. This will extend an existing ban on cold calling, for instance on pensions, so the public will know that cold calls about any financial products are illegitimate.

Action from the tech sector

Government and industry will root out fraud on social media platforms. Through the Online Safety Bill, user-to-user platforms will be required, by law, to put in place systems to prevent fraudulent content appearing on their platforms. This includes scam adverts and fake celebrity endorsements, with heavy fines for those who fail to protect their users. It should be as simple as possible to report fraud on all platforms – ensuring action is taken and suspect content removed. Government has asked tech firms to adopt a simple and consistent way to report with the click of a button. Government have also asked all large tech companies to check that firms advertising financial investments on their platforms are registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. Government, working with regulators, will also publish data on which websites and social media platforms are the safest to use and which ones host the most fraudulent content.

A new National Fraud Squad

A new National Fraud Squad is being created with 400 new investigators, taking a proactive, intelligence-led approach and focusing on high-end fraud and organised crime. The Fraud Squad will be jointly led by the National Crime Agency and City of London Police. The Home Secretary has already made fighting fraud a priority for all forces by including fraud in the National Strategic Policing Requirement and specifying the capabilities each force should have in place to tackle fraud. The Strategic Policing Requirement was published in March this year.



Replacing Action Fraud

Government is investing £30 million over three years to turn Action Fraud into a state-of-the-art reporting centre, including a simple to use reporting website and upgraded call centre with reduced waiting times. There will also be a portal so that victims can receive timely updates on the progress of their case.

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>


A new Anti-Fraud Champion

Anthony Browne MP has been appointed by the Home Secretary as the Prime Minister's Anti-Fraud Champion, to help drive Government work with UK and global businesses that will ensure that all sectors and industries are playing their part in eliminating fraud.

Intelligence led response and disruptive activity

The UK Intelligence Community is also being deployed to identify and disrupt more fraudsters. This will be supported by a multi-agency fraud cell which will produce high quality intelligence packages so that collective resource can be dedicated to where they will have most impact.

More victims of fraud will be reimbursed

Government is also changing the law through the Financial Services and Markets Bill so that more victims of fraud will get their money back. Victims of unauthorised fraud (like bank card theft) are entitled by law to get their money back from their banks within 48 hours. Victims of authorised fraud – where victims are tricked into handing over their money – aren't offered the same protections. We will change this by giving the regulator the power to mandate that Payment Service Providers reimburse, so that victims of authorised fraud receive the same protections. Many banks already do this, but the new duty on banks will ensure a more consistent framework for reimbursement to victims. 

Both the Fraud Strategy (CP 839) and consultation on SIM Farms (CP 843) have been laid before the House and are also available on GOV.UK.

Statement from

Linked statements

This statement has also been made in the House of Lords

Home Office

Government's Fraud Strategy

Lord Sharpe of Epsom

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office

Conservative, Life peer and JOHNSON appointee

